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**How Underground
Literature Crossed the
Iron Curtain**

FRIEDERIKE KIND-KOVÁCS

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*How Underground Literature
Crossed the Iron Curtain*

FRIEDERIKE KIND-KOVÁCS



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to Gyula, Laura, and Lotte Ené...

I saw it *with* your hatred, I saw it *with* your friendships...

Jonathan Brent, Vienna, 2006

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	xi
Acknowledgements	1
Introduction: <i>Tamizdat</i> as Cold War Interaction	3
Chapter 1: <i>Tamizdat</i> on Trial	17
Chapter 2: <i>Tamizdat</i> : A Transnational Community	81
Chapter 3: <i>Tamizdat</i> Border Crossings	217
Chapter 4: <i>Tamizdat</i> : The Writers' Right to Literature	331
Epilogue: Beyond the Literary Cold War	423
Bibliography	431
Index.....	479

Illustrations

1. Cover of Pavel Litvinov, *The Trial of the Four: The Case of Galanskov, Ginzburg, Dobrovolsky and Lashkova*. New York: Viking Press, 1972. Library Collection of Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 62
2. Cover of the English version of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture*. Translated from Russian by F. D. Reeve. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1972. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 73
3. Cover of first *tamizdat* version of Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn, *Arkhipelag Gulag, 1918–1956: Opyt knudozhestvennogo issledovaniia* (3 volumes). Paris: YMCA, 1974. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 74
4. Photograph of a meeting of the Polish-Czech Solidarity group at the Czech-Polish border, 1978. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 105
5. Cover of a publication of the Polish-Czech Solidarity group, 1989. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 106
6. Photograph of Carl and Ellendea Proffer in Ardis packing room, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1975. Personal archive of Ellendea Proffer Teasley. 128
7. Photograph of Zdena and Josef Škvorecký, Toronto, 1987. Repository of the Československé dokumentační středisko, 1948-1989 [Czechoslovak Documentation Center], Private archive, Vilém Prečan, Prague. 130

8. Photograph of Gordon Skilling and Zdena Škvorecká at Sixty-Eight Publishers, Toronto, Christmas 1977. Repository of the Československé dokumentační středisko, 1948-1989 [Czechoslovak Documentation Center], Private archive, Vilém Prečan, Prague. 130
9. Photograph of the exhibition *La Nuova Arte Sovietica; Una prospettiva non ufficiale* (*The New Soviet Art: A Non-Official Perspective*) at the cultural event “Biennale del Dissenso,” Venice, 1977. Venice Biennale. Historical Archive of Contemporary Art, Venice, Italy. 163
10. Photographic montage for the cultural event “Biennale del Dissenso,” Venice, 1977. Douglas Davis, *Questions Moscow New York Moscow New York: 1976-1977*. Venice Biennale. Historical Archive of Contemporary Art, Venice, Italy. 165
11. Example of a book published in the Writers from The Other Europe Series. Cover of Milan Kundera, *The Joke*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 179
12. Cover of Czech *samizdat* version of a Polish book: Czesław Miłosz, *Zotročený duch* [*The Captive Mind*], Prague 1988. [Original Polish Title: *Zmewolony umysł*, Paris: Instytut Literacki 1953]. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 209
13. Cover of the Czech *samizdat* version of a Russian book: Alexander Solženicyn, *Souostroví Gulag* [*Gulag Archipelago*], Prague: Konfrontace Knížnice, 1974. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 210
14. Cover of the Polish *samizdat* version of a Czech book: Václav Havel, *Zaoczne przesłuchanie* [*Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvizdala*] Warsaw: Nowa 1989. [Original Czech Title: *Dálkový výslech*]. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 211
15. Cover the of Polish *samizdat* version of a Czech book: Milan Šimečka, *Przywrócenie porządku* [*The Restoration of Order: The Normalization of Czechoslovakia, 1969-1976*]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krag, 1982. Polish *Samizdat* Version [Original Czech *Samizdat*: *Obnovení pořádku: příspěvek k typologii realneho socialismu*], Prague: Edice Petlice, 1978. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 211

16. Aesthetic appearance of a Czech *samizdat* publication: Cover of Jan Patočka, *Dvě studie o Masarykovi* [*Two Studies about Masaryk: An Attempt at a Czech National Philosophy and its Failure*]. Prague: Edice Kvart (Quarto Editions), 1977. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 212
17. Aesthetic appearance of a Czech *tamizdat* publication: Cover of Jan Patočka, *Dvě studie o Masarykovi*. [*Two Studies about Masaryk: An Attempt at a Czech National Philosophy and its Failure*]. Toronto: Sixty-Eight Publishers, 1980. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 213
18. Aesthetic appearance of a Russian *samizdat* publication: First page of the *samizdat* edition of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Arkh-ipelag Gulag*, FSO 01-005.2/13 Collection Mark Rubinovic, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, Bremen, Historical Archive. 214
19. Aesthetic appearance of a Russian *tamizdat* publication: Cover of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 215
20. Photograph of the building of Radio Free Europe in Munich. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 222
21. Photograph of a studio of Radio Free Europe, English Garden, Munich. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 223
22. Cover of the first issue of *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January, 1952. Library Collection of Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 226
23. Cover of George Orwell, *1984*. Cologne: Index, 1984. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 232
24. Photograph of Andrei Amalrik and Karel van het Reve at Amalrik's home, Ulitsa Vachtangova 5, Moscow, August 1968. Photography by Jozien van het Reve. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam. 272
25. Photograph of Andrei Amalrik in Magadan, working on a German edition of his work *Will the Soviet Union survive 1984?* [*Kann die Sowjetunion das Jahr 1984 erleben?*]. Zurich: Diogenes, 1970. Photograph taken in Magadan, May 27, 1974. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam. 272

26. Photograph of Andrei Amalrik and Karel van het Reve at the copy machine at the Alexander Herzen Foundation which was also the home of Karel van het Reve and his family, Amstel 268. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam. 273
27. Cover of *Index on Censorship*, "Underground Writers," Vol. 12, No. 2, April 1983. Archive of *Index on Censorship*, London. 288
28. Photograph of the Czechoslovak *samizdat* repository. Czechoslovak Documentation Center [Československé dokumentační středisko], in Scheinfeld near Munich. Photograph by Katerina Volková. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 323
29. Photograph of Vilém Prečan at the main entrance of the Czechoslovak Documentation Center in Scheinfeld. Private Archive Vilém Prečan, Prague. 323
30. Photograph of Vilém Prečan's office at the Czechoslovak Documentation Center in Scheinfeld. Private Archive, Vilém Prečan, Prague. 324
31. Photograph of a *samizdat* shelf at the Czechoslovak Documentation Center in Scheinfeld. Repository of the Československé dokumentační střediska 1948–1989 [Czechoslovak Documentation Center]. Private Archive, Vilém Prečan, Prague. 325
32. Photograph of the Alexander Herzen Foundation at the Frankfurter Book Fair, October 1973. Archive of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam. 326
33. Photograph of the "Dissident Literature from the CSSR" booth, 1987. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 327
34. Photograph of the "Exhibition of Czechoslovak Exile Publishers (Rozmluvy London, Index Cologne; Sixty-Eight Publishers, Toronto)," 1987. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 327
35. Photograph of the exhibition wall, entitled "The Long Way from *Samizdat* to the Publisher—from the Publisher to the Reader," 1987. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 328
36. Photograph of the Budapest, October 1985. Guests sitting at the desk: Frantisek Janouch, Attila Ara-Kovács, Mária Kovács. In the background: István Csurka, Aryeh Neier, Sándor Csóóri, János Vargha, János Kenedi, Árpád Göncz, Mihály Vajda, Jeri Laber, Gerald Nagler. HU OSA 318-0-9. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF). Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 329

37. Photograph of the Alternative Cultural Forum, Budapest, October 1985. András Kovács, Per Wästberg, Gáspár Miklós Tamás. HU OSA 318-0-9. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF). Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 329
38. Cover of the English version of *A Chronicle of Current Events: Journal of the Human Rights Movement in the USSR*, No. 28–31. London: Amnesty International Publications, 1975. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 340
39. Cover of the Russian version of *Khronika tekushchikh sobytii* [*The Chronicle of Current Events*], November 1972–March 1973. New York: Khronika Press, 1974. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 342
40. Cover of the reprint of the Russian version of *Khronika tekushchikh sobytii* [*The Chronicle of Current Events*], 1–15. Moscow, 1968–1970. Amsterdam: Alexander Herzen Foundation, 1979. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 342
41. Cover of the first issue of *A Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*. Quarterly. New York: Khronika Press, No. 1, November 1972–March 1973. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 343
42. Photograph of a meeting of the Charter 77 group, Prague 1977. Archive of the Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 355
43. Photograph of the Czech version of the Charter 77 document, 1977. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague. 357
44. Photograph of the exhibition of the Alexander Herzen Foundation in Paris in the 1970s. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam. 366
45. Photograph of Jozina van het Reve Israel, wife of Karel van het Reve, at an exhibition of the Alexander Herzen Foundation in Paris in the 1970s. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam. 366
46. Cover of the first issue of *Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture*, Vol. 1 (1982). Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 374
47. Cover of the first issue of *Index on Censorship*, Spring 1972. Archive of Index on Censorship, London. 376

48. Cover of the first issue of *Cahiers de l'Est. Revue Trimestrielle*, no. 1, January 1975. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 391
49. Cover of the third issue of *L'Alternative: Pour les droits et les libertés démocratiques en Europe de l'Est*. No. 3, 1980. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 403
50. Cover of the first issue of *La Nouvelle Alternative: Revue pour les droits et les libertés démocratiques en Europe de l'Est*. No. 1, April 1986. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 404

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INTRODUCTION

Tamizdat as Cold War Interaction

The Iron Curtain is an enduring symbol of the division between East and West. Even after 1989, historians continued to interpret the cultural encounter between the ‘real’ socialist East and the ‘capitalist’ West in terms of a contest for supremacy over literature and art. In this view, the Soviet system restricted unauthorized exchanges with the Western cultural sphere, severely impeding the flow of ideas and information.¹ The ensuing image of a disconnected continent continues to color our understanding of Cold War culture. This study presents a different picture of the Cold War. While the Iron Curtain prevented people from moving freely between East and West, the uninterrupted flow of large amounts of underground literature suggests this border was not airtight. The transnational processes and East-West interactions presented here challenge the conception that Cold War Europe’s literary cultures were entirely divided. In her recent study on the Iron Curtain as a social phenomenon, Edith Scheffer asserts that “[t]he Iron Curtain was not as iron, the Cold War was not as cold, divided Germany was not as divided, and totalitarianism was not as total as our metaphors imply.”²

Stressing a similar notion of permeability, György Péteri reinterprets the Iron Curtain as a transparent “Nylon Curtain” that “yielded to strong osmotic tendencies that were globalizing knowledge about culture,

¹ Feuerlicht, “A New Look at the Iron Curtain,” 186–89.

² Scheffer, *Burned Bridge*, 4.

goods, and services across the systemic divide.”³ People on both sides of the Iron Curtain were not just bearers of political and cultural systems; these ‘border crossers’ triggered transfers that deconstructed the seemingly insurmountable abyss between the cultures of Cold War Europe. The English-Czech dissident Rosemary Kavan, for instance, understood the need “to preserve this hole in the wall which the regime had built” around Czechoslovakia, a nation that for centuries had embedded “its cultural and political traditions” in the West.⁴ She and many others used “their hammers and chisels” to “widen the hole in the wall,”⁵ allowing large amounts of underground or ‘desk drawer’ literature to circulate across Europe and North America.

This book peers through these chinks in the Iron Curtain.⁶ It contributes to this transnational shift by illuminating the cross-fertilization between East and West.⁷ Weaving together the fabrics of Cold War literary cultures, I identify a transnational undertaking that reinforced détente, dialogue, and cultural transfer, counterbalancing the persistent belief in Europe’s irreversible divisions.⁸ This project was *tamizdat*: the unauthorized migration of non-conformist literature across the Iron Curtain. Meaning “publishing-over-there”⁹ or “the things published yonder,”¹⁰ *tamizdat* provides the lens for the new reading of Cold War Europe’s history that I undertake here. Under this label, various kinds

³ Péteri, ed., *Nylon Curtain*, 4.

⁴ J. Kavan, “Epilogue,” in *Love and Freedom*, 274.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Recently, a few studies have encouraged historians to reconsider Cold War interactions and thereby laid the foundation for a new Cold War history. Money and Lanza, eds., *De-Centering Cold War History*; Major and Mitter, eds., *Across the Blocs*; Autio-Sarasma and Humphreys, *Winter Kept Us Warm*; Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*; Villaume and Westard, *Perforating the Iron Curtain*. Veen, Mähler, and März, eds., *Wechselwirkungen Ost-West* addresses transnational dissidence. For theoretical reflections on transnational approaches, see Werner and Zimmermann, “Penser l’histoire croisée”; Hadler and Middell, “Auf dem Weg zu einer transnationalen Geschichte Ostmitteleuropas”; Cohen and O’Connor, eds., *Comparison and History*; Osterhammel, “Transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte.”

⁷ Schwartz, *Cold War Culture*.

⁸ Wallenstein, “Interpreting East-West Relations,” 197.

⁹ *Tam* in Russian means “there.” Kasack’s definition of *tamizdat* can be found in the *Dictionary of Russian Literature*, or in *Lexikon der Russischen Literatur*, 1270–274.

¹⁰ Van het Reve, “Samizdat,” 21.

of non-conformist literature reached Western capitals without official authorization to be published abroad, either in the original language or in translation.¹¹ This literature was produced by ‘non-conformist’ writers who refused to observe the literary conventions of the Soviet regime and subsequently became virtually unpublishable inside the Eastern Bloc. Many of the non-conformist writers did not want to see their writings as political statements. They simply refused to write what was expected of them. The term ‘non-conformist’ thus avoids the overly used and politicized terms of dissent and dissidence. In particular, individuals and social groups questioned the enforced impermeability of the Iron Curtain during periods of political relaxation, such as the thaw in the late 1950s;¹² the collective and individual aspirations to implement the Helsinki Accords in the late 1970s;¹³ and the emerging call for *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the late 1980s.

Many of these authors started their *tamizdat* careers by initially ‘self-publishing’ in *samizdat*. First used by the Russian poet Nikolai Glazkov in 1947 to describe the underground circulation of his uncensored poetry, “sam sebja izdat”¹⁴ became a serious alternative to official discourses, translating people’s dissatisfaction with the seemingly irreversible separation of Europe’s literatures into the illegal practice of producing and distributing *samizdat*. From the late 1950s onwards, testimonies, appeals, and political memoirs, but also uncensored novels, poetry, and other texts from the ‘Other Europe’—that is, the Europe behind the Iron Curtain¹⁵—reached and were published in the West.¹⁶ While ‘desk drawer’ literature

¹¹ After this, the phenomenon was more often referred to as “Western publication” or “exile publication,” not distinguishing between the text’s publication by Western or by émigré publishers. In a similar way, the term *samizdat* was not used in every socialist country. For instance, in countries like Poland the phenomenon of underground publication was described as “independent creativity.”

¹² Ehrenburg, *The Thaw*.

¹³ Birnbaum, “Human Rights and East-West Relations.”

¹⁴ See “Samizdat,” in *Lexikon der Russischen Literatur*, 1270–274.

¹⁵ The flexibility of the term ‘Other Europe’ allows us to address the European countries behind the Iron Curtain as a type of cultural and literary entity, joined together by their common destiny of political domination by the Soviet system.

¹⁶ The geographical concept of the ‘Other Europe’ was first coined by Czesław Miłosz in *Une autre Europe*, and later used by Jacques Rupnik in his book *The Other Europe*. The term refers to all European countries that were cut off by the Iron Curtain.

was mostly written for friends,¹⁷ with only the faintest hope of being officially published in a better future, publishing in the West was seen as a meaningful alternative that allowed writers to escape their literary solitude. The title of an article from 1985, “Out of the Drawer & Into the West,” reflects the mechanism of this cultural phenomenon: the migration of texts across political and ideological borders.¹⁸

The material product of this literary underground has raised immense scholarly interest in the last few decades.¹⁹ But the history of *tamizdat* is still largely ignored.²⁰ Despite the traffic between East and West, the Iron Curtain divided the emerging non-conformist literature into two separate spheres: a literary underground and an exiled literary sphere ‘over there,’ or *samizdat* and *tamizdat*. Rather than attempting to disentangle these phenomena, *Written Here, Published There* insists on their interconnection. Self-publishing and publishing in the West offered

¹⁷ Eberstadt, “Out of the Drawer & Into the West,” 36.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The phenomenon of *samizdat* has been widely researched, both throughout the Cold War and afterwards. The most recent publications on *samizdat* include Komaromi, “Samizdat and Soviet Dissident Publics,” and Falk, “Resistance and Dissent.” The outcomes of the conference in *Samizdat and Underground Culture in the Soviet Bloc Countries* at Penn State University were published in two subsequent special issues: “Publish and Perish: Samizdat and Underground Cultural Practices in the Soviet Bloc I/II.” See also Weichsel, Eichwede, Sapper, eds., “Blick zurück nach vorn”; Johnston, “What is the History of *Samizdat*?”; Komaromi, “The Material Existence of Soviet *Samizdat*”; Eichwede, ed., *Samizdat*; Hirt, *Präprintium*; Prečan, “Independent Literature and *Samizdat*”; Goetz-Stankiewicz and Ash, eds. *Good-Bye, Samizdat*; Skilling, *Samizdat and an Independent Society*; Hájek, “Samizdat Literature: An Introduction.”

²⁰ The recently published volume of Kind-Kovács and Labov, eds., *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond*, aims to close this research gap. Two earlier innovative articles have dealt with *tamizdat*: Steiner, “Introduction: On Samizdat, Tamizdat, Magnitizdat,” and Benatov, “Demystifying the Logic of Tamizdat.” The work of both Popa, “Dépasser l’exil,” and Kliems, “Der Dissens und seine Literatur,” were pioneering in establishing the field. A first study of the interrelationship between *gosizdat*, *samizdat*, and *tamizdat* was undertaken by Pospelovsky, “From Gosizdat to *Samizdat* and *Tamizdat*.” He suggested viewing these three forms of literary expression not as isolated phenomena, but as the products of one and the same culture. Billstein’s documentary *Die Tamizdat-Connection (The Tamizdat Connection, 2003)* was the first major post-1989 work to provide a insight into this unusual cultural cross-border endeavor.

authors two legitimate routes to audiences. Their production, circulation and reception frequently went hand in hand. They formed a joint system that allowed writers to regain a degree of literary independence. Together these spheres symbolize the ‘other’ literature of Soviet dominated nations, an alternative literary canon that represents a form of transnational cultural and literary resistance to systems of censorship.

But these two practices are rarely understood as expressions of the same literary impulse.²¹ In contrast, this book presents *tamizdat*’s transnational dimension as a missing piece of *samizdat*.²² Further developing this idea, I understand the migration and circulation of *tamizdat* beyond the Iron Curtain as constructing a collective Western memoir of the literary underground.²³ Against this background, I first reconsider the notion that the Iron Curtain prevented the flow of literature. Second, I reassess the over-simplified interpretation of the East-West relationship, challenging the continuing belief in a literary divide. *Tamizdat*’s ability to develop into a common intellectual project across the Iron Curtain disputes the assumption that cultural transfer across this barrier moved in only one direction from West to East.²⁴ Alfred Reisch has recently argued that “the uninterrupted and steady flow of Western books and publications” to the Eastern Bloc interrupted Cold War isolation. It can indeed be acknowledged that “by means of dictionaries and books on languages, art and architecture, sociology, religion and philosophy, economics, management, and farming, history and memoirs, and catalogues” Western political ideas and Western culture were able to “penetrate the cultural Iron Curtain, despite the attempts of the communist postal censors and customs officials to stem the flow.”²⁵ Intellectuals from Central and Eastern Europe broke “out of their cultural and ideological prison” regaining contact with their Western counterparts.²⁶

I want to distance myself from conclusions that heroize the West’s “ultimate victory” in which “books played a uniquely decisive role.”²⁷

²¹ Popa, “Dépasser l’exil.”

²² One of the few studies dealing with *tamizdat* is Richmond, “Hot Books in the Cold War.”

²³ The fact that a large part of *samizdat* materials are still held at the archives of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University supports this argument. See the inspiring article by Zaslavskaya, “From Dispersed to Distributed Archives.”

²⁴ Niedermüller, “Kultur, Transfer und Politik,” 161. Translation by the author.

²⁵ Reisch, *Hot Books in the Cold War*, 525.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Books were indeed important. But these were not only Western books. On the contrary, underground texts smuggled out of the Soviet orbit profoundly changed the minds of people in Cold War Europe. *Tamizdat* provides a lens through which to explore how the reciprocal transfer of literature between East and West slowly but persistently created a transnational network of intellectual and literary influences. This entanglement gives rise to the difficult question of texts' reception outside their place of origin, however. In this context, it is necessary to understand the opportunities and difficulties inherent in the migration of texts from official to unofficial spheres, and vice versa. Relocated from one cultural setting to another, the aesthetics, social function, and reception of migrated texts underwent significant changes.

Instead of only exploring the discursive structures of Cold War politics and ideology, this book is also concerned with the physical practices and social interactions that enabled the traffic of uncensored cultural goods across the Iron Curtain. It analyzes the development of a transnational system of literary production, diffusion, and reception, as well as the complex processes of professional and personal interactions inside this system. In so far as "[t]he dissident movement" was "a heterogeneous collection of people [...] forced into opposition to the Soviet regime,"²⁸ its Western counterpart also consisted of diverse personalities, different political agendas, and individual literary foci. Despite their different backgrounds and orientations, however, the interactions between individuals and groups in East and West produced the much needed—though fragile—threads of this complex transnational web of literary and cultural relations. These relations, I argue, which involved a wide variety of authors (poets, writers, essayists, human rights activists), but also typists, smugglers, printers, publishers, and readers represent the core element of the *tamizdat* phenomenon.²⁹ By including underground writers and émigrés as well as Western publishers and intellectuals, *tamizdat* was a highly integrative transnational project.³⁰ By deciphering the personal entanglements that developed across the Iron Curtain and the ensuing common debates, this book provides an insight into an

²⁸ Women and Eastern Europe Group, "Introduction," 8.

²⁹ Another study applying the concept of a "republic of letters" to a recent phenomenon is Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*.

³⁰ The fact that New York intellectuals, publishers, human rights activists, and émigrés in the US are perceived as part of this cross-cultural field reveals the integrative idea of "Europe" as a symbol against Cold War division.

unusual literary product of the Cold War. It closely examines *tamizdat* for its ability to provide the vision of and practice for an undivided, pan-European literature that deconstructed (although marginally) the divisions of Cold War Europe.

One of the book's major undertakings is to understand the impact of human rights discourses on the emergence of this cross-border literary community, in particular, the ever louder appeal for the observance of writers' rights. The signing of the Helsinki Final Act (1975) is widely seen as a pivotal moment in the articulation of artistic freedom. Sarah B. Snyder's work, for instance, contends that Helsinki triggered a cross-Iron Curtain human rights network comprised of "politicians, diplomats, human rights activists, Jewish refuseniks, ethnic nationalists, international NGOs, journalists, human rights experts, and ethnic interest groups."³¹ Aryeh Neier, too, asserts that despite the difficulty of quantifying the human rights movement's role in 1989, "it was one of the important factors that helped to bring about those changes."³² Challenging this widespread conception, however, Paulina Bren and Steven Kotkin demonstrate that the Helsinki accords were neither a real treaty nor legally binding. As a "declaration of intentions" authorities did not feel obliged to implement them, and ordinary people largely did not support them either.³³ The Czechoslovakian public, for instance, did not identify with *Charter 77*, a document which called for the implementation of the Helsinki Accords in Czechoslovakia;³⁴ after 1968 they simply wanted to live a 'normal' life. Kotkin's argument that the 1989 events emerged because of the internal instability of the establishment—the 'uncivil society'—rather than a widespread drive for freedom, similarly resists celebrating Helsinki.³⁵

The life stories and case studies presented here do support Snyder's observation that it was common for Eastern European dissidents to contact American diplomats requesting that their predicaments form a part of political discussions.³⁶ However, I argue that by the 1950s writers on both sides of the Iron Curtain had already begun to question (and even disobey) the rules of state socialist censorship and the realities of

³¹ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*, 8.

³² Neier, *The International Human Rights Movement*, 153.

³³ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*, 5.

³⁴ Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*, 108.

³⁵ Kotkin and Gross, *Uncivil Society*, xvii.

³⁶ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*, 8.

Cold War isolation. By simultaneously tracing the mobilization of human rights and *tamizdat*, the book resists reinforcing the heroic narrative of Helsinki's "breakthrough to freedom" as a pivotal moment in the formation of an alternative public sphere and the seismic 1989 transformation.³⁷ But *Written Here, Published There* is not a story about "green-grocers" and ordinary people's struggles to recover independent civil societies inside the Eastern Bloc.³⁸ The study of *samizdat* and *tamizdat* provides an insight into how a comparably small group of intellectuals implemented a cross-border project. Thus, the study of this transnational literary project does not claim to show what caused the 1989 revolutions. Instead, it sheds light on re-emerging literary and cultural links that circumvented the ideologically enforced alienation of Europe's literary domains. While the marginality of *samizdat* and *tamizdat* might invite the dismissal of their importance, the fringe nature of these historical phenomena is intriguing.³⁹ The element of risk involved in disseminating these texts, which could result in job loss, long prison sentences, or deportation to forced labor camps, prevented 'ordinary' people from becoming involved on a widespread scale. But without this 'scandalous' nature, neither *samizdat* nor *tamizdat* would have gained such a wide transnational readership and visibility.

To talk about the emergence of 'real' alternative public spheres would be inaccurate, however. Instead, the book focuses exclusively on a transnational literary network of writers, intellectuals, and publishers. This community used human rights discourses to appeal for the freedom of expression and for the unobstructed flow of literature. The participants' sincere belief in a literature without borders and their constant effort to weaken the Iron Curtain's grip on literature stands at the center of this book. To a Western media obsessed with any expression of 'dissidence,' 'opposition,' and the 'underground,' these intellectuals were a compelling spectacle.⁴⁰ *Written Here, Published There*, then, is not a classical intellectual history, but a social history of intellectuals, as it focuses not only on intellectual ideas and discourses but also on social practices.⁴¹

³⁷ Kotkin and Gross, *Uncivil Society*, xvi.

³⁸ Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*.

³⁹ Sawyer, "Letter from Poland: Beating the Censor," BR2.

⁴⁰ Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*, 110.

⁴¹ Rather than an intellectual history, the present work represents a subspecies of social history, see Wickberg, "Intellectual History," 383–84.

The book's time frame stretches from the early 1950s to 1989–91, telling the story of *tamizdat* from its appearance until its 'official' disappearance. I do not provide a detailed analysis of all the various kinds of *samizdat* and *tamizdat* literatures across the entire former Soviet Bloc. Similarly, due to the sources' dispersion (and even partial inaccessibility) and the wide range of languages underground literature was written in, this study does not claim to provide an overarching survey of *tamizdat* activity. Instead, this book explicitly presents microhistorical case studies of different *samizdat* and *tamizdat* initiatives throughout the region. This approach enables both a sociological and historical understanding of *tamizdat* as a transnational social activity. Only by juxtaposing a range of *tamizdat* authors from 'Other European' countries is it possible to paint a broad picture of these historical phenomena across different times and countries.

Apart from a continuous attempt to describe cross-border processes of community-building, this book contributes to a better understanding of the participants' different motivations and the influences that characterized their social relationships. I present a complex view of the web of interactions between the publishers, editors, translators, critics, and readers that made up the *tamizdat* community. This *histoire croisée* grasps the core of the phenomenon; namely, the multifaceted professional and often personal contacts between the different activists that led to the mutual entanglement of Eastern and Western literary cultures.⁴² This integrated analysis maps the transnational constellation of *tamizdat* while simultaneously zooming in on the individuals that colored *tamizdat*'s particular character.

The book focuses on the work of non-conformist writers who were no longer willing to comply with Soviet literary conventions, rather than on dissident writings with explicit political agendas.⁴³ While the Soviet authorities originally used the term 'dissident' to refer to individuals that criticized the system, some individuals later identified with the term, while others rejected this politicized label. The present volume thereby avoids the danger of reproducing the highly politicized debate on the propagandist use of literature in the sphere of the so-called cultural Cold War.⁴⁴ In order to reach a less polarized view of literature in this period,

⁴² For the concept of "histoire croisée" see Werner and Zimmermann, "Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung."

⁴³ Falk, *Dilemmas of Dissidence*.

⁴⁴ Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?* and *The Cultural Cold War*; Warner, "Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom"; Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*; Hanuschek, Hörnigk, and Malende, eds., *Schriftsteller als Intellektuelle*.

Andrew Wachtel suggests recognizing “a continuum” rather than “a stark contrast between the official and nonofficial literary worlds.”⁴⁵ Following from this, I shift attention towards materials and discourses that aimed to deconstruct the Cold War as it was played out in the field of literature, instead of stressing *samizdat*’s and *tamizdat*’s function as devices for a “cultural contest between the capitalist democracies and the Communist states.”⁴⁶ Literary approaches rather than political debates are the objective here.

This book outlines *tamizdat*’s four layers: its historical beginnings; the individuals involved on both sides of the Iron Curtain; the social practice of literary transfers; and the resulting development of common debates. Chapter 1 outlines the appearance and reception of *tamizdat* texts, primarily from the Soviet Union, in the West. Three literary scandals dating from 1956–1973 typify this process: the *cause célèbre* of Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* in 1957; the trial of Andrei Sinayavsky and Yuli Daniel in 1966; and the Western publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962) and *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973).⁴⁷ These events were more than sensational instances of secret literary activity; they were crucial milestones in the history of ‘publishing-over-there.’ As such, this chapter investigates the way they shaped Western audiences to be alert to uncensored writings from the ‘Other Europe.’ I initially focus on ‘dissonant’ literature after the thaw that dared to shift away from the harmony of socialist realism through new forms of literary expression in order to understand how rigid the official literary system was.

Chapter 2 identifies the emergence of the transnational community that rendered these complex cross-border publishing projects possible. Looking into the life stories of the figures who helped establish this network allows us to understand their individual paths into this transnational community of literature. Instead of following a strict timeline, I identify three perspectives on *tamizdat* participation. Interviews and memoirs will juxtapose the perspectives of 1) underground writers, 2) émigrés, and 3) Western publishers. Tracing the evolution from individual suffering to group formation in the Soviet sphere foregrounds how the state’s interference triggered literary non-conformity. The political,

⁴⁵ Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant After Communism*, 38.

⁴⁶ Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 3.

⁴⁷ Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was first officially published in *Novy Mir* inside the Soviet Union in 1962.

ideological and national diversity of the émigré community similarly demonstrates how émigrés became key players in this newly emerging sphere of cross-border communication. This in turn deciphers how the connection between these literary spheres and a Western readership was established and maintained. The chapter closes by uncovering how Western publishers followed not only their belief in the quality of *samizdat* literature, but equally aimed to reconnect to their own past inside the ‘Other Europe.’

Chapter 3 explores how the illegal smuggling of texts physically penetrated the Iron Curtain. I combine the perspectives of key figures who established individual channels with sources documenting the contribution of such institutions as Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) in the large-scale transfer of *samizdat* literature to the West. I analyze the means by which émigrés acted as physical couriers who wanted to disrupt the literary Iron Curtain.⁴⁸ In particular, Western embassies enabled literary and artistic communication. Individual ambassadors and attachés personally engaged in the unofficial but constant circulation of texts between Eastern and Western Europe. I close with an analysis of the rare institutional involvement of embassies in the cause for an alternative cultural diplomacy.

Chapter 4 identifies the missing link between the practical realization of literary transfers and *tamizdat*’s actual intellectual contribution, shifting focus to the East-West exchange of ideas. It examines the relationship between the transnational call for the observance of writers’ (and human) rights, the demands of the Helsinki Accords for an increased physical exchange of literature across partitioned Europe, and the emergence of literary projects to implement these demands. The claims preceding and surrounding Helsinki will be linked to a series of Western journals that promoted debates on topics neglected or distorted by the mainstream media inside the Soviet sphere. Presenting these journals’ literary strategies to give writers from the ‘Other Europe’ a place in European literary discourse will contribute to a clearer picture of literary arguments aimed at overcoming the reality of literary isolation behind the Iron Curtain. This leads to a closing analysis of one particular *tamizdat* debate, namely the heated discussion that took place about the literary idea of ‘Central Europe,’ which jointly engaged Eastern and Western intellectuals. This closing section uncovers how *tamizdat* literature from

⁴⁸ Donahue, “Viewing the West from the East,” 247–48.

the 'Other Europe' played a role in constructing an alternative European literary canon that integrated both literatures into a common discursive space.

Throughout the four chapters it will become clear that the study of *tamizdat* is not only a history of smuggling and publishing by a group of marginal individuals. It also brought together intellectuals from different cultural and political contexts through common literary projects and intellectuals debates. This development, however, was very much dependent on the advancement of literary transfers. After Western intellectuals became sensitive to the cultural relevance of uncensored literature from the 'Other Europe,' *tamizdat* was instrumental in a practical and emotional rapprochement, but also to the discursive engagement of intellectuals on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Since such intellectual encounters could take place across borders and were no longer limited to the underground, I argue that *tamizdat* was successful in its ability to counteract the literary isolation of Eastern and Western Europe, fending off the consolidation of an Iron Curtain that would have brutally cut the open book of Europe's literature in two.

CHAPTER 1

Tamizdat on Trial

FROM THE TERROR TO DOCTOR ZHIVAGO

Boris Pasternak's Russian classic *Doctor Zhivago* already had a venerable history when it became one of the most iconic *samizdat* texts.¹ The moment it crossed the Iron Curtain and was released by the Milanese publishing house Feltrinelli Editore in 1957, the novel laid the basis for half a century of Soviet *tamizdat*.² *Tamizdat*'s long literary legacy in Russian letters stretches back to the Free Russian Press which took advantage of the more liberal conditions in other countries to circumvent Russian political censorship.³ Established by Alexander Herzen in London in 1853, the press published and circulated revolutionary literature that would have been prohibited inside Russia.⁴ Herzen's émigré press "played a hugely important role in Russian political and intellectual life both at home and in emigration."⁵ It even inspired Karel van het Reve, a Dutch professor of Russian literature at Leiden University, to set up the Alexander Herzen Foundation (AHF, Alexander Herzenstichting)

¹ Caruthers, "Underground Voices," B11.

² Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*. The initiator of the publishing house was Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. See Feltrinelli, *Senior Service*.

³ Specht, "*Tamizdat*," 2379–380.

⁴ Partridge, "Alexander Herzen and the Russian Press"; Kunka, *Alexander Herzen and the Free Russian Press*.

⁵ Young, *The Free Russian Press in London*.

in Amsterdam in 1969,⁶ whose goal was to publish underground literature from the Soviet Union in the West, declaring that “[w]e received our inspiration from the enlightened efforts of Alexander Herzen to defy totalitarian methods against Russian authors by publishing them in the West.”⁷

However, incidents of ‘publishing-over-there’ can be traced back to far earlier periods and authoritarian regimes in European history. Parallels with the Cold War phenomenon of *tamizdat* can be drawn, for instance, with the illegal distribution of banned works smuggled into pre-revolutionary France via illegal methods.⁸ In his famous article “Introduction to a Variation” (1985), Milan Kundera compares his own situation as a banned author to his literary predecessors in *Ancien Régime* France:

For a Czech writer in the 1970’s, it was odd to think that “Jacques le Fataliste” (also written in the 70’s) was never published during its author’s lifetime and that it circulated among a private and restricted audience in manuscript only. What in Diderot’s day was an exception has, in Prague 200 years later, become the lot of all important Czech writers, who, banned from the presses, can see their works only in typescript. It began with the Russian invasion, it has continued to the present and, by the look of things, is here to stay.⁹

However, the Russian case provides a unique insight into the historical continuity of the phenomenon of uncensored literature. In a 1979 interview the Czech writer Eva Kanturková describes the relationship between the historical roots of the phenomenon in the time after the Russian revolution and its later forms that spread throughout the Soviet-dominated sphere:

⁶ Peter Reddaway, Jan Willem Bezemer, and Karel van het Reve were the main members of the Alexander Herzen Foundation. For further information on the Foundation, see: <http://www.iisg.nl/collections/herzenstichting/herzenstichting.php>.

⁷ Raymont, “New Durch Group is Publishing Writings of Soviet Dissenters,” 25.

⁸ See Darnton’s two studies, *The Literary Underground* and *The Forbidden Best-Sellers*.

⁹ Kundera, “Introduction to a Variation.”

Art is the carrier of national continuity, and the works of suppressed authors seem to me as a bridge between the recent past and the present. They are the spine of a nation. I am thinking of the already mentioned Bulgakov, but also of Pasternak or Akhmatova, if I am already speaking about Russian literature. Something similar is happening right now in Czechoslovakia.¹⁰

A search for the roots of *tamizdat* reveals that by the 1920s some works censored inside the Soviet Union could only appear abroad, for instance books by Boris Pilnyak and Maria Tsvetaeva. Parallel to the appearance of ‘publishing over there,’ *samizdat* self-publications also developed in the early period of the Soviet Union. These writings bore the name of the typewriter on which they were reproduced: Underwood. Among such early writers were Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam and Marina Tsvetaeva. Marina Tsvetaeva recalls her own underground publishing in Moscow in 1921: “I copy out poems sewn together in notebooks and sell them. We call this ‘overcoming Gutenberg.’”¹¹ Such early forms of *samizdat*, which relied on various methods of reproduction, circulated in Moscow and Leningrad. But even during Czarist times, forms of self-publication existed. “If those grand old Russian writers idolized in the Soviet Union were writing now,” Osgood Caruthers, a reporter for the Los Angeles Times argued in 1973, “they undoubtedly would be subjected to the same official harassment and persecution being meted out to today’s intellectuals.”¹² Although retrospectively glorified, they were “the dissidents of their day—the articulate critics of the czars’s excesses.” When Pushkin illicitly disseminated his revolutionary poem “Ode To Liberty,” which he wrote between 1817 and 1820, and was subsequently expelled in 1920 from St. Petersburg, he may have created the first *samizdat* literature.¹³

However, from the early 1920s, when *samizdat* and *tamizdat* originated, until the mid-1950s few uncensored texts survived. As Jonathan Brent points out, a strong dependency existed between the end of terror and the widespread distribution of *samizdat*: “the extreme terror of the Soviet period” made “the production of literature impossible,” as well

¹⁰ Lederer, *Tschechische Gespräche*, 207–8. Translation from German by the author.

¹¹ Cited in Telesin, “Inside *Samizdat*,” 25.

¹² Caruthers, “Underground Voices,” B11.

¹³ Ibid.

as the “distribution and dissemination” of *samizdat*.¹⁴ Reflecting *samizdat*’s precarious status, Ann Komaromi argues that the physical appearance and condition of a *samizdat* manuscript—a barely readable and often fragile object—in many ways mirrored the condition of the authors’ lives and reminded the reader of the authors’ own threatened survival: “the physical page seemed as embattled and fragile as the Soviet author himself.”¹⁵ In their symbolic function as surviving text-bodies of life during socialism, the texts mediated knowledge about life’s uncertainty and literary life under socialism in particular. Just as the text was torn, hidden, and harmed, so were the authors themselves persecuted and injured. Roy Medvedev points at the way prisons and labor camps inevitably triggered unofficial literary production:

the Stalin Terror did not so much liquidate dissidents as generate them, even though between 1936 and 1952 it was mainly directed against entirely loyal Party members and citizens of the Soviet state. Did not millions and millions of these people become dissidents in the prisons and the camps? Was it not those few survivors of the ordeals of the Archipelago who 20 or 25 years later, made up an important part of the new generation of opposition?¹⁶

In addition to the all-penetrating terror’s effects on texts’ production, Pospelovsky argues that “[i]solation, both from the outside world and from one’s own countrymen, was more destructive.”¹⁷ Just as the system of terror prevented the large-scale production of *samizdat*, so too was the production of *tamizdat*, which was dependent on the flow of literature, only facilitated after Stalin’s death. The slow political relaxation resulted in an increased production and circulation of uncensored thought, leading Geoffery Hosking to label *samizdat* and *tamizdat* “post-totalitarian culture” that emerged from a new appreciation of the individual that was incompatible with the anti-personalist totalitarian system.¹⁸ Only when the fear of massive repressions and political purges began to

¹⁴ Brent, “From Memories to Legacies.”

¹⁵ Komaromi, “The Material Existence of Samizdat,” 603.

¹⁶ Medvedev, “The Future of Soviet Dissent,” 25–26.

¹⁷ Pospelovsky, “From Gosizdat to *Samizdat* and *Tamizdat*.” See also the Russian study by Donatov, “*Tamizdat*—literatura v izgnanii.”

¹⁸ Hosking, “The Search for the Image of Man,” 349–51, 360–65.

fade, when “everything had been almost strangled to death by the tentacles of censorship,” only for “a rare chance to breathe” to emerge, did more and more authors use the newly gained security to write literature not simply destined for the drawer.¹⁹ In a 1972 interview, Josef Brodsky remembers how smooth the transformation from earlier forms of ‘self-publication’ and ‘self-circulation’ to *samizdat* was:

samizdat is an extremely flexible concept. If by *samizdat* you mean the passing of manuscripts from hand to hand and the copying of them on typewriters in a systematic way, then my poems started to circulate before *samizdat* began. Someone who liked them would simply copy them and take them away to read. And then someone would borrow them from that person.²⁰

Becoming more and more daring with time, authors would seek publicity and recognition first of all among their colleagues and friends, before stepping out of these narrow circles to address wider audiences.

The ‘literary thaw’ characterized by the relaxation of the severe restrictions on literature after Stalin’s death represents another precursor to the post-Helsinki explosion of *tamizdat* in the mid-1970s.²¹ During the thaw, the first *tamizdat* writings reached the West through early initiatives aimed at guaranteeing the flow of literature from the East. From the late 1950s, early ‘dissonant voices’ reached Western scholars or publishers and appeared in translation abroad. The appearance of these writings resulted in an increased reception of East European literature by Western intellectual circles, and the broad variety of topics presented in this literature penetrated their debates.

The East-West controversy over Pasternak and his novel *Doctor Zhivago* serves as a paradigmatic example of what might be called the “Cold War on the literary Front” of the 1950s.²² Pasternak experienced the paradox of the Cold War division in a very private manner. Torn apart by the Soviet Writers’ Union, suffering public disgrace and

¹⁹ Telesin, “Inside *Samizdat*,” 25.

²⁰ Scammell, “Interview with Josif Brodsky.”

²¹ *The Thaw* was the title of Ilya Ehrenburg’s 1954 novel, which was to give the name to an entire generation of literary writing. See Ehrenburg, *The Thaw*, as well as Gibian, *The Interval of Freedom*, 125.

²² This is the title of an article by Burg in *Problems of Communism*.

serious personal difficulties in his own country, while simultaneously becoming one of the most widely read writers in the West,²³ with this novel Pasternak stood in the crossfire of the ideological confrontation between East and West. Out of a corpus of approximately fifty-seven articles in the journals *Encounter*,²⁴ *Preuves* and *Problems of Communism*,²⁵ which dealt with early non-conformist literature from the Soviet Union, eighteen engaged solely with Pasternak's novel. Of these journals, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) created both *Encounter* and *Preuves* and, as was discovered in 1967, they were part of the CIA's secret literary operations.²⁶ All three were highbrow intellectual publications and were among the principal vehicles of intellectuals in New York and Europe. Although the journals were founded before 1954, the first 'dissonant voices'—literary voices from outside the harmony of socialist realism—would not appear until after Stalin's death. Between 1953 and 1962, all of them debated the literary phenomenon 'Pasternak' in depth, as well as non-conformist writings in general.²⁷

The scandal surrounding the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* was set off by the first meeting between Pasternak and Sergio D'Angelo, an Italian journalist working for the publisher Feltrinelli, at Pasternak's summer residence in Peredelkino, a dacha colony for writers near Moscow in May 1956:

A young journalist, Sergio D'Angelo, working for the Italian Communist Party in the Soviet Union, rushed to see Pasternak at Peredelkino and proposed to issue an Italian translation of [*Doctor Zhivago*] at the Feltrinelli publishing house. After some hesitation the author brought the manuscript from his study

²³ Compare Markov, "Notes on Pasternak's 'Doctor Zhivago,'" 14.

²⁴ The first journal to be founded was the West Berlin-based *Der Monat* (1948), which was followed by its Parisian partner *Preuves* (1951). In the period between 1952 and 1956, the following journals were established: *Problems of Communism* (Washington, 1952), *Encounter* (London, 1953), *Soviet Survey* (London, 1956), and *Tempo Presente* (Rome, 1956).

²⁵ The US governmental agency, the United States Information Agency (USIA), published *Problems of Communism*.

²⁶ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 103.

²⁷ Among the anthologies of Soviet underground and exile literature are Hayward and Blake, eds., *Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature*; Zavalish, *Early Soviet Writers*; Slonim, *Modern Russian Literature*; Brown, *Russian Literature Since the Revolution*; Miłosz's "Introduction."

and gave it to the journalist, saying, with a laugh, "You are hereby invited to watch me face the firing squad."²⁸

After this encounter Feltrinelli was determined to publish *Doctor Zhivago*. After D'Angelo handed over the manuscript to Feltrinelli later that month, an intensive exchange of letters began between the publishing house and Pasternak. Despite Pasternak's awareness of the danger of publishing his book abroad, he wrote to Feltrinelli on June 30, 1956 that "I am especially happy to hear that the novel will appear and be read in your country. In case of a delay of the announced publication of the novel by various journals, I will find myself tragically in an embarrassing situation. However," he continued, "this should not affect you. Don't hesitate to continue with translating and publishing the book, and I wish you good luck!"²⁹ Pasternak's long struggle with Soviet publishers resulted in his new conviction that, above all, it was important to see his work in print, regardless of the country of publication: "Ideas are not born to be hidden or suppressed in their becoming but to be communicated to others."³⁰ Olga Ivinskaya, Pasternak's lover from 1947 until his death in 1960, describes how his world view was responsible for his openness to publishing abroad. "He was a generous man," she said, "who really thought, with the spontaneity of a child [...] that frontiers between countries are of no account and must be crossed by people who stand outside ordinary social categories—poets, artists, scholars."³¹

When information about the planned publication of the novel reached the KGB, foreign minister Dimitri Schipilow planned to take steps to prevent it.³² Pasternak's willingness to see his book published abroad resulted in coercion, threats, and various attempts by Soviet literary officials to prevent publication. At first, Pasternak was forced simply to delay the appearance of his novel in Italy until its publication in Russia would be ready. In order for this to take place, however, he was informed that major changes would have to be made. Expressing his disappointment, Pasternak urged Feltrinelli to publish the original version:

²⁸ "The Nobel Prize," in *Hostage of Eternity, Boris Pasternak 1890–1960*, exhibition by the Herbert Hoover Memorial Exhibit Pavillon.

²⁹ Letter cited in Feltrinelli, *Senior Service*, 128–29. Translation from German by the author.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

³¹ Ivinskaya, *A Captive of Time*, 232.

³² Feltrinelli, *Senior Service*, 133.

“The sadness that I feel regarding the planned alterations of my text would increase if I knew that you will include those changes undertaken in the Italian translation, although I continue to hope that your edition will be strictly faithful to the authentic manuscript.”³³ In order to anticipate further steps by Soviet literary officials, Feltrinelli wrote a letter to the Soviet state publishing house. In it, he outlined his objectives with regards to the publication of Pasternak’s novel in Italy:

The Western reader will for the first time become acquainted with the voice of a great artist and poet, who has provided, in an artistic form, a detailed analysis of the the course of the October revolution as the beginning of a new epoch through which socialism has turned into a natural form of social life. The fact that this voice belongs to a man who stands outside of any political activity offers the Western reader the guarantee of his sincerity and his trustworthiness.³⁴

On June 20 the following year, Pasternak informed Feltrinelli of his belief that the book would never appear in the Soviet Union. “The novel will never appear here,” he wrote, “the problems and difficulties that await me if it only appears abroad, without a parallel publication inside the Soviet Union, are issues that shouldn’t bother either you or me. It is just urgent that the book appears as soon as possible.”³⁵

Soon afterwards, the General Secretary of the Soviet Writers’ Union, Alexei Surkov, and the head of the cultural section of the Central Committee, Dimitrij Polikarpow, threatened Pasternak, insisting he withdraw his permission for the manuscript to be published in Italy. As Pasternak had informed Feltrinelli not to accept any letter by him that was not in French, and since he believed that the publication could no longer be stopped, Pasternak complied with the Soviet officials’ orders and sent a telegram to Feltrinelli, withdrawing his publication rights. This telegram, written under the supervision of Surkov and Polikarpow, offered the following excuse: “I came to the conviction that what I wrote cannot be perceived as an accomplished work [...] I believe a publication of the novel in the present state is impossible [...] Please be so kind as

³³ Letter cited in Feltrinelli, *Senior Service*, 135. Translation from German by the author.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

to send the manuscript of the novel *Doctor Zhivago* back to my Moscow address as soon as possible.”³⁶ Alexei Surkov visited not only Pasternak but also Feltrinelli in Milan where he delivered the warning that if Feltrinelli published the book, he would publicly evoke associations with Pilniak, who had been liquidated by Stalin.³⁷ Despite this personal threat and Pasternak’s telegram begging him not to publish his work, Feltrinelli sent Pasternak a letter in which he made it clear that he would not delay the book’s Italian publication:

in order to avoid any further tension in Western literary circles, [...] we advise you to no longer delay the appearance of the book, because this would not only stop the book’s publication, but also create a political scandal that we never sought to create. We shall decline, in any case [...] all responsibility regarding the possible repercussions that the appearance of the work will have due to the tactlessness shown by some of your functionaries.³⁸

When Surkov learned of Feltrinelli’s determination to publish the book, he reportedly said during a press conference in Milan on October 19 that “Pasternak has written to his Italian publisher asking him to return the manuscript for revision,” but “*Doctor Zhivago* will nevertheless be published against the author’s will.”³⁹ Surkov went on to philosophize about the non-existent artistic freedom in the West, mirroring the opinion of Western critics about Soviet unwillingness to publish Pasternak’s novel or to allow its appearance in the West. He remarked that “[t]he Cold War thus invades literature. If this is artistic freedom as understood in the West, then I must say that we have a rather different view of it.”⁴⁰ He and other functionaries attempted to prevent the publication of such books as Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago*, which were slightly critical of anything the Soviet Union stood for or that slightly deviated from the aesthetic conventions of socialist realism.

Pasternak, ignoring the warnings, secretly sent another letter to Feltrinelli on November 2. In contrast to the telegram, which had been

³⁶ Ibid., 141.

³⁷ Chiaromonte, “La voix de Pasternak,” 72.

³⁸ Letter cited in Feltrinelli, *Senior Service*, 144–45. Translation from German by the author.

³⁹ Ivinskaya, *A Captive of Time*, 227.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

composed under pressure, the letter reflected Pasternak's happiness on hearing about his book's publication. "I lack the right words to express my gratitude," he wrote, "[h]ow happy I am about the fact that you and Gallimard or Collins did not let yourselves be misguided by the stupid and brutal appeals which carried my signatures, signatures which you can rightly describe as fake, as they were forced upon me by means of a mixture of fraud and threats."⁴¹ While touched by the opportunity to reach a world readership, Pasternak nevertheless disliked the scandal that surrounded the appearance of his book. "The novel itself is hardly at issue—most of the people concerned with the matter haven't even read it," he complained to the Russian playwright Alexander Gladkov. Indeed, "a few of them would gladly just drop the whole affair—not out of sympathy for me, mind you, only because they want to avoid a public scandal. But this is no longer possible."⁴²

But Pasternak knew that he could no longer avoid the scandal, as nothing could stop the book's publication. On November 23, 1957, the novel appeared in an Italian translation and sold out within hours. In the following year it was translated into many other languages and appeared in London, New York and Paris. It was praised as "the celebrated novel of the century,"⁴³ and in the years that followed it became the most coveted book in many Central and East European countries. Its bestseller status did not extend to its country of origin, however. Happy to finally see his novel in print, Pasternak nevertheless formulated his long-term plan to publish it in Russian: "[w]e shall soon have an Italian Zhivago, a French, an English, and a German Zhivago—and one day perhaps a geographically distant but Russian Zhivago!"⁴⁴

At the time, Pasternak could not have known that a Russian version was being prepared in the West that was intended to secure him the Nobel Prize.⁴⁵ In September 1958 a pirated version in Russian appeared with Mouton Publishers in Holland.⁴⁶ As the Swedish Academy required

⁴¹ Letter cited in Feltrinelli, *Senior Service*, 146. Translation from German by the author.

⁴² Ivinskaya, *A Captive of Time*, 228.

⁴³ Cover of *Doctor Zhivago*, 1958.

⁴⁴ Letter cited in Feltrinelli, *Senior Service*, 146. Translation from German by the author.

⁴⁵ Tolstoi, *Pasternak's Laundered Novel*, cited in Finn, "The Plot Thickens," and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Did CIA Help Pasternak Win Nobel prize?"

⁴⁶ Sergeeva-Klyatis, "International Provocation," 48.

any work under consideration to be submitted in its original language, this translation was of major importance. It appears that the CIA, which hoped for the recognition of a genuine Russian writer, secretly arranged this.⁴⁷ Later that year, despite incomplete sources as to how and by whom it was translated, the novel appeared in the Russian original. Two days before the award ceremony, Pasternak wrote a letter to Renate Schweitzer in which he presented his interpretation as to why his novel had been nominated: "It seems the hunger in the whole world for freedom and simplicity is so great that everybody loves *Doctor Zhivago* as a happy excuse for a kind of self-emancipation."⁴⁸ He was aware that his novel remembered times before the Russian revolution, which had been marked by "a rich, deeply affecting art of the sort found in the ancient world, or during the Renaissance."⁴⁹ However, with this simplicity, which he perceived as the most important element of a book about the least analyzed period of Soviet history, Pasternak succeeded in reaching a wide readership and a worldwide reputation. On October 23, 1958, Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature "for his important achievement both in contemporary lyrical poetry and in the field of the great Russian epic tradition."⁵⁰

Despite initially expressing his sense of being "immensely thankful, touched, proud, astonished, abashed"⁵¹ in a first telegram to the Swedish Academy, a drastic change occurred during the following two days. In a second telegram sent on October 29 Pasternak wrote that "[c]onsidering the meaning this award has been given in the society to which I belong, I must reject this undeserved prize which has been presented to me. Please do not receive my voluntary rejection with displeasure."⁵² This letter did not appease Soviet unhappiness about the Italian publication. Although stressing the "voluntary rejection" of the Nobel Prize, it is now well known that Soviet officials coerced Pasternak into denying the award. As the novel had been prevented from publication in the Soviet Union in 1956 for having "put in doubt the validity of the October Revolution,"⁵³ its Western publication was harshly condemned by the Soviet Writers'

⁴⁷ Tolstoi, *Pasternak's Laundered Novel*.

⁴⁸ Ivinskaya, *A Captive of Time*, 237.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 238.

⁵⁰ Cited in Frenz, ed., *Nobel Lectures: Literature 1901–1967*.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Hayward, "Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*," 38.

Union. In October 1958 Soviet officials began their public attack on Pasternak. Both in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and in *Pravda*, Pasternak was turned into the literary “Judas” and accused of having become an “ally of those who hate our country.”⁵⁴ While gaining immense fame in the West as a new voice from Russia, Pasternak was stripped of his status as a Soviet writer and expelled from the Writers’ Union.⁵⁵

At his quiet country house in Peredelkino, Pasternak wrote down his critical vision of the Russian Revolution, giving it a voice through the main character of Dr. Zhivago:

No single man makes history. History cannot be seen, just as one cannot see grass growing. Wars and revolutions, kings and Robespierres, are history’s organic agents, its yeast. But revolutions are made by fanatical men of action with one-track minds, geniuses in their ability to confine themselves to a limited field. They overturn the old order in a few hours or days, the whole upheaval takes a few weeks or at most years, but the fanatical spirit that inspired the upheavals is worshiped for decades thereafter, for centuries.⁵⁶

The revolution and the war led one of Pasternak’s characters to conclude that “[e]verything had changed suddenly—the tone, the moral climate.” Therefore, he argued, nobody knew “what to think, whom to listen to.”⁵⁷ The Western readership liked such subtle but concise statements about the Russian Revolution, which was seen as the root of all evil and the book’s “anti-Communist flavor.”⁵⁸

This literary imagination disobeyed Soviet literary politics in three ways. First, Pasternak broke with the notion of socialist realism and went beyond the aesthetic limits of Soviet literature. Second, by stressing the personal identity and individuality of his heroes, he criticized the way the Soviet Union’s “political reality” affected “the private lives of” individuals.⁵⁹ This questioned the Soviet concept of the necessary dependence of the individual on the state and destabilized its all-embracing power.

⁵⁴ Cited in Swayze, *Political Control of Literature*, 201.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, 1957, 454.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 126.

⁵⁸ Cortesi, “New Soviet Novel Appears in West.”

⁵⁹ Hayward, “Pasternak’s *Dr. Zhivago*,” 45.

Third, despite knowing about the Soviet handling of disobedient writers, including the possibility of being excluded from the Writers' Union and no longer being able to publish in the official press, he pursued the plan to publish his uncensored novel abroad. Max Hayward, Pasternak's translator, rightly said that "[t]he decision to write the novel as it has been written, without fear or scruple, and to press for its publication, cannot have come easily to Pasternak."⁶⁰

OUT OF THE DESK DRAWER

By pursuing publication in the West, Pasternak escaped the silence the state forced upon his creativity. It offered him a way out of the restricted life of writing and publishing only in the official Soviet press. That he dared to publish his writings in the West under his full name was exceptional; many other unofficial Soviet writers published only anonymously.⁶¹ Even so, this did not guarantee them long-term safety, as the 1966 trial of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel showed.⁶² Writers who published in the West and whose books were not yet published at home violated their duties as citizens, which equaled treason. They were perceived as disloyal to their state, as they transgressed "what is condemned by the existing institutions and by the community formed by these institutions." However, publishing in the West was often the only way for unorthodox writers to voice their beliefs.⁶³ Until the uncensored Russian writers of the late 1950s dared to send their manuscripts abroad, it was common to write for the desk drawer. Instead of restricting oneself to the artistic forms and themes of socialist realism and observing the principle

⁶⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁶¹ Another means of guaranteeing an author's security was the formula "this work has been published without the author's knowledge." See Prečan, "Independent Literature and *Samizdat*," 100.

⁶² As Czesław Miłosz has pointed out when discussing Tertz's essay "On Socialist Realism," publishing under a pseudonym carried a two-fold problem: on the one hand, Tertz "knows full well the risk he runs should the authorities identify him as the author," and, on the other, "his preservation of his anonymity means that he can acquire neither fame nor money." Besides, publication under a real name sometimes meant a kind of protection, as the name would be known in the Western press, which again had some influence on Soviet behavior. See Miłosz, "Introduction," 132.

⁶³ Ibid.

of *partiinost*—conformity to party guidance⁶⁴—the private desk drawer held anything of personal or artistic significance. It allowed the author to maintain a certain “freedom of creation, [an] inner freedom.”⁶⁵ Even if there was no real existing freedom of thought, it meant the author could maintain a sense of individuality against the tide of literary conformity. This individuality, as a way out of the dilemma facing Soviet writers, could be preserved by resurrecting one’s creative imagination: “Thus write he must, and where—as in the Soviet Union—organized society denies him publication of his innermost thought, he writes for ‘the drawer,’ for posterity and perhaps a few personal friends.”⁶⁶

However, as the forced silence of the ‘drawer-manuscript’ contradicted the writers’ inherent wishes to address an audience, various literary escape routes slowly emerged that allowed them to reach a readership. Among non-conformist authors who could not gain recognition from either official or national audiences, the desire to write and circulate their writings in the underground or to send them to Western publishers increased. These new forms of writing were certainly not as widespread or well-developed as during the 1970s and 1980s, but *samizdat* writings and anonymous publications in the West (such as Pasternak’s case) started to appear in the years following Stalin’s death. Sometimes, these two forms of publication became intermingled, such as poems that could not be published in the official press were written in the underground and reached the West through Western visitors or diplomats. As an anonymous literary critic of the collection *Poems from the Underground* recounts in 1961 in *Problems of Communism*:

the poems [...] were given to me in Warsaw last summer by a Polish friend I had known in Moscow. The manuscript, as it was given to him, was unsigned, and the person who gave it to him would tell him no more than the poems were written by someone who is not young, and who is a known poet in the Soviet Union.⁶⁷

This personal account, and a close look at the collection of poems, offers an insight into what became possible during the thaw. For instance, one

⁶⁴ Hayward, “Soviet Literature in the Doldrums,” 11.

⁶⁵ Zavalishin, *Early Soviet Writers*, 4, 1.

⁶⁶ “Editor’s Note: Poems from the Underground,” 1.

⁶⁷ Zr., “The Conscience of a Generation,” 7.

poem carried the title “Propaganda”—unthinkable in the Soviet Union—and ended with the words “[e]verything is propaganda. The whole world is propaganda.”⁶⁸ Despite some setbacks in the loosening of restrictions, for instance after the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the general climate of literary relaxation persisted throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. Yet, this did not automatically mean a relaxation in terms of censorship and publishing. As described in an article in *Preuves* in 1955, the Soviet Union expressed “Seventeen ‘Niets’ to the Détente” which epitomized the Soviet Union’s understanding of the freedom of thought.⁶⁹ Among the refusals were the “niets” directed against the “abolition of censorship,” “the opening of lecture halls and information centres,” and “the free circulation of books and journals.”⁷⁰ Even though the official attitude did not change formally, there was a slight increase in the tolerance of disagreement, of “more than one idea in Soviet literature.”⁷¹ Characteristic of the time was the slow but ongoing rehabilitation of writers whose works had been forbidden in Stalin’s years; certain Soviet writers were republished and some émigrés rediscovered. However, these rehabilitations were often accompanied by programmatic comments and pedagogic advice.⁷² The most significant characteristic of the new era of literature was the changing attitude of writers towards party guidance in cultural matters and their openness in terms of style and literary forms. Writers started to rebel against what was associated with socialist realism and its aesthetic system: “The literature of socialist realism with its old-fashioned creaking, fictional furniture, its cardboard ‘positive’ heroes, its Victorian prudery, and moral pep-talks was an anti-literature par excellence.”⁷³

While the themes *Doctor Zhivago* addressed were problematic, what was most striking about Pasternak’s literature was its “unorthodoxy, in formal rather than political terms.”⁷⁴ Pasternak was one of the first authors who began to disobey the rules of ‘sorealist’ literature. Short for socialist realism, this officially sanctioned type of literature conveyed

⁶⁸ “Editor’s Note: Poems from the Underground,” 5–6.

⁶⁹ B., F., “Dix-sept ‘niet’ à la détente,” 3–4. Translation from French by the author.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁷¹ Brown, “Into the Underground,” 222.

⁷² Burg, “The Cold War on the Literary Font,” 2.

⁷³ Siegel, “Voices in Dissonance,” 67.

⁷⁴ Hayward, “Introduction: Soviet Literature,” xxxv.

the Soviet understanding of art as a realistic depiction of life under socialism. Pasternak and other writers aimed at deconstructing the 'socialist' notion of contributing, by means of literature, to the ideological transformation of the reader's consciousness, presupposing literature's direct purpose for the advancement of communism.⁷⁵ Their approach distanced itself from the literary distortion of Soviet reality, which forced upon all literary stories a positive plot and a heroic ending. The new writers began to dismiss the idea of literature as a means to educate the people in terms of party propaganda, and stopped portraying the "power of the state as the greatest good."⁷⁶ Instead, they expressed direct pessimism, using their imagination to describe the often unbearable reality of life, which had previously been "passed over in silence in the name of an ideal."⁷⁷ In the years after Stalin's death, literature again became a "forum for the intellectuals," where they communicated with each other and the public. This provided a "sense of community and the possibility of communion" without which they would have remained an "inarticulate underground."⁷⁸ In this community, authors challenged official ideas through their subtle handling of themes or ambiguous registers that allowed them to express things that could not be stated "*en toutes lettres* by intellectuals in other fields."⁷⁹ The main import of Ilya Ehrenburg's *Thaw* and Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*, for instance, was that the "lone, independent-minded intellectual" was a fully "legitimate and vital member of society," an issue which stood in "full contradiction to *partiinost* [the official doctrine of the party]."⁸⁰

The distinction between Western literature and Soviet 'socialism' comes to the fore most clearly in the titles of books. According to Andrei Sinyavsky, while Western books carried titles such as *Death in the Afternoon* or *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Ernest Hemingway), *Jeder Stirbt Für Sich Allein* (*Everyone Dies Alone*, Hans Fallada), or *Voyage Au Bout De La Nuit* (*Journey to the End of the Night*, Louis-Fernand Céline), Soviet titles expressed such sentiments as *Pervye radosti* (*First Joys*, Konstantin

⁷⁵ Statute of the Union of Soviet Writers at the First All Union Congress of Soviet Writers, 1934, 716, cited in Tertz, *The Trial Begins* and *On Socialist Realism*, 148.

⁷⁶ Miłosz, "Introduction," 134.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Hayward, "The Thaw and the Writers," 555.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 557.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Fedin), *Pobediteli* (*The Victors*, Eduard Bagritsky), and *Ispolneniye Zhelanii* (*Fulfilled Wishes*, Veniamin Kaverin).⁸¹ Ideology thoroughly penetrated Soviet literature and the individual writers had to subordinate their writings to the all-embracing socialist purpose: to create a “positive hero” and thereby the “ideal man of the future.”⁸² Reluctant to further obey the rules of socialist realism, Sinyavsky encourages the future Russian writer to develop “Hypotheses instead of a Purpose, an art in which the grotesque will replace realistic descriptions of ordinary life.” “Such an art,” he continues, “would correspond best to the spirit of our time. May the fantastic imagery of Hoffmann and Dostoevsky, of Goya, Chagall, and Mayakovski [...] and of many other realists and non-realists teach us how to be truthful with the aid of the absurd and the fantastic.”⁸³ He points out that the Soviet writer has arrived at a dead end. But Sinyavsky sees this ambiguity as an opportunity to “start to think, to set riddles, to make assumptions” which would hopefully give way to the kind of creativity that produces “something marvelous.”⁸⁴

The sheer number of ways that Russian writers and their émigré counterparts bypassed censorship to find readers for their most characteristic works and to publish these in the West created a parallel Russian literary scene. This new literature painted another picture of Soviet society and Russian culture, which was much appreciated in the West. But what did Western reaction to this new import from the Soviet Union look like? What actors were involved in disseminating its non-conformist thought? Answers to these questions clarify the origins of the Western fascination with non-conformist literature, which originated in the 1950s and lasted until the dissolution of the Iron Curtain. While human rights activists were the main dissenting voices during the 1970s and 1980s, in the 1950s it was literary scholars and Russian translators who initiated interest in underground or unofficial writers.

⁸¹ Tertz, *The Trial Begins* and *On Socialist Realism*, 168.

⁸² This term is continuously used by Tertz to compare Soviet ideology with radical religious movements that believe in one truth that serves an all-embracing purpose. See *ibid.*, 152–67, for example.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 219.

RUSSIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND COLD WAR JOURNALS

The extraordinary interest of scholars in Soviet literature can best be understood against the backdrop of the inauguration of the first specialist Russian research institutes at Western universities in the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁸⁵ In 1946, the Russian Institute was established at Columbia University; in 1949, the Russian Research Center at Harvard; and the Institute for the Study of the USSR at St. Antony's College, Oxford, was opened, followed by the renowned Russian and East European Studies Center in 1953. These institutes were formed mainly to study "Russian institutions and behavior in an effort to determine the mainsprings of the international actions and policy of the Soviet Union,"⁸⁶ with the objective of giving political forecasts and teaching Russian and Soviet history and culture. In view of the Cold War struggle over ideological supremacy, students of Russian Studies at Columbia were promised "the opportunity to learn something of the background and culture of the most powerful of the Slav peoples."⁸⁷ Through the creation of a scholarly community of Russian specialists the institutes hoped to inform the public, who was considered a major factor in foreign policy development.⁸⁸ The actual result, however, was the emergence of a small, highly engaged group of émigré scholars—many of whom were Russian themselves—that upheld the traditions of free academic research in a discipline that was frequently deployed to support totalitarian state propaganda.⁸⁹

Beyond the more political side of the newly inaugurated research institutes, the new disciplinary approach towards Soviet literature was decidedly scientific. Soviet literature, scholars stated, should be studied like "any other subject, as a body of material to be assembled, classified, and interpreted [...] according to whatever system of ideas seems appropriate."⁹⁰ Key Soviet literature scholars emerged from these institutes, including Max Hayward (Oxford), Ernest J. Simmons (Columbia), Marc Slonim (Sarah Lawrence College, New York), and Gleb Struve

⁸⁵ See Engerman, *Know Your Enemy*.

⁸⁶ Kluckhohn, "Russian Research at Harvard," 266.

⁸⁷ Columbia Russian Institute, "Columbia's Russian Institute," 97.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ McLean, "Literature and Revolution in Soviet Russia," 461–62.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 462.

(Berkeley). Besides increasing the profile of Russian literature in the West, they helped preserve its literary culture and accumulate important collections of otherwise lost texts. Hayward is said to have been “the custodian of Russian literature in the West, until it could be restored to Russia.”⁹¹ It was Hayward, too, who furiously wrote against the oft-heard criticism that Soviet Studies were utilized for American liberation policy. As the CIA funded many of these institutes, this criticism was justifiable. However, the articles and introductions accompanying many of the books and non-conformist literary works do not give the impression of being propaganda tools in the ‘cultural Cold War.’ Hayward, an exacting translator of such Russian writers as Pasternak, sharply condemned the continuous reproduction of Cold War stereotypes. Although the Soviet system had indeed “abused and distorted the relationship between politics and literature,” Hayward acknowledged that it was impossible to entirely divorce the two. This point should be stressed to “those tiresome outsiders who, ignorant of Soviet conditions, throw up their hands in horror with a cry of ‘Cold War!’ in protest at the intrusion of politics into any discussion of Soviet literature.”⁹² Hugh Wilford offered a less politicized evaluation of the relationship between the CIA and its cultural operations, arguing that despite their financial dependence on the organization, the employed intellectuals still possessed their own independent minds.⁹³

Whereas criticism of the study of Soviet literature was accompanied by continuous accusations of serving McCarthy in destabilizing Soviet influence in the West, teaching Soviet literature faced a different problem. During the first years of the new institutes’ existence, Russian literary studies were marked by the paradoxical situation of not knowing how to approach Soviet literature or attract students’ interest. As new forms of literature only reached the West after Stalin’s death, teachers were ironically restricted to teaching Socialist realist literature, which was perceived as a Soviet mouthpiece. This paradox is poignantly expressed in a 1949 article: “Most people are convinced that nearly all Soviet novels and plays are purely propaganda for the Soviet way of life. Is it possible to inspire the student with interest for this kind of literature if one is not an admirer of the Soviet system?”⁹⁴

⁹¹ Cited in Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 116.

⁹² Hayward, “Solzhenitsyn’s Place,” 433.

⁹³ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 113.

⁹⁴ De Graaff, “The Teaching of Soviet Literature,” 216.

Besides the emergence of academic research centers, a handful of journals appeared in Western capitals such as New York, Paris, London, and Berlin between 1945 and 1965, which published, amongst other things, early non-conformist articles from the Eastern Bloc. These journals were guided by the conviction that the Cold War could be fought through funding non-conformist writers, anti-communist poets, and thinkers who wrote against the Soviet regime. A number of periodicals also emerged in the atmosphere of hope and the acknowledgment of the necessary flow of information between East and West occasioned by the Helsinki Agreements in the 1970s. The early post-war journals shared their later cousins' aim of deconstructing hegemonic Soviet power over the non-conformist writer. But they also exhibited a far more political nature insofar as they were conceived in the light of an American liberation policy. From their immediate experiences of the Second World War and the consolidation of the Iron Curtain, the editors pursued a political rather than a literary strategy. Some of them published non-conformist literature for strategic reasons in the frame of the 'cultural Cold War.'

The three anti-communist journals of the early Cold War period—*Encounter*, *Preuves*, and *Problems of Communism*—were part of a transatlantic network of anti-communist journals that were all founded between 1949 and 1965 by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. They focused on the literary dimensions of the Cold War division. Similar to the criticisms aimed at the Russian research centers, journals such as *Encounter* are said to have played an important role in the 'cultural Cold War.' When it was discovered that the CIA, in close cooperation with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, had subsidized these journals as well as some books,⁹⁵ a number of critical accounts appeared. They questioned the way the non-conformist viewpoints of these periodicals and intellectuals were distorted by this political commitment and financial dependence.⁹⁶ At a later stage, editors of *Encounter*, such as the New York intellectual Irving Kristol, stated during interviews that they had not been informed of the CIA's financial support, and that cultural independence had played a crucial role for all of them.

⁹⁵ Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?*, 245. Among the CIA-funded books were Blake, *Half-Way to the Moon*, Hayward and Labeledz, *Literature and Revolution in Soviet Russia*, as well as Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*. This subject, however, falls outside the scope of this book.

⁹⁶ Saunders posed the question of to what extent "financial aid distorts the process by which intellectuals and their ideas were advanced." Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?*, 5.

Without delving deeper into the debate of the danger of CIA-funding for cultural projects during the Cold War, it is important to mention that many of the smaller journals that helped promote *samizdat* in the Western sphere were also directly or indirectly funded by CIA resources. But instead of dismissing any kind of financial support by the CIA as amoral, it seems more appropriate to stress the rather complex nature of this historical phenomenon. Yet, the question remains as to what extent the journals that published non-conformist literature can be perceived as mere instruments of the CIA's literary policy. A look at their editorials provides insight into their literary and political stance. The "Presentation" of *Preuves*, for instance, was written in a bellicose Cold War manner: "We all know the current threat to Western civilization of what it believes to be its greatest treasure: the freedom of thought. [...] Now once again the freedom of thought, which generations of thinkers, writers, artists, have had for centuries, is threatened."⁹⁷ However, *Encounter*'s editorial reveals an interest in new forms of writing as their overall aim. In the West, Stalin's death was considered a catalyst for the liberation of new forms of writing and artistic developments. *Encounter* began its 1953 editorial by expressing this hope: "Is it our fancy, or does this first issue of *Encounter* appear in a good season? Is there a breath of fresh air drifting through the fog, which we have been accustomed to take for our normal atmosphere?"⁹⁸ Stalin's death was perceived as the crucial turning point—this time in terms of the Western approach towards Soviet literature. *Encounter* interpreted this event as an opportunity for "words [to] again mean what they say." Furthermore, the journal indirectly formulated its aim of deconstructing the Soviet notion of literature by regarding "literature and the arts as being values in themselves, in need of no ulterior justification."⁹⁹

VOICES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Beyond the publication of many classic Western anti-communist and anti-totalitarian writings, such as the works of Koestler and Orwell, in the years following Stalin's death articles appeared that commented on new developments in Soviet literature.¹⁰⁰ Their titles give an impres-

⁹⁷ Roure, "Presentation," 8.

⁹⁸ "Editorial: After the Apocalypse," 1.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Shaw, "Some Writers Are More Equal than Others."

sion of the journals' literary direction, interested as they were in manuscripts entitled *Poème sans héros* (*Poem without Heroes*), *La vie littéraire en URSS* (*Literary Life in the USSR*), *New Directions in Soviet Literature*, and *The Soviet Writer's Search for New Values*. Besides this, personal stories and reports of meetings were considered important ways of offering the Western reader a glimpse into the literary life of the Soviet Union.¹⁰¹ Some articles, especially in *Problems of Communism*, confronted the literary aspect of the Cold War, painting a precise picture of the conflict between literary liberals and conformists.¹⁰² The changes taking place in the literary field were perceived as the first signs of the diminution of Soviet power. However, as many articles placed literature's aesthetic changes after Stalin's death in the foreground, the oft-repeated accusation that the publication of non-conformist literature was just a highly propagandistic act does not hold. The literary criticism and the publication of new 'dissonant voices,' that questioned the stylistic hegemony of socialist realism, might have served some strategic aims of the literary policy of the US, but the articles, poems, and books did have something more concrete to offer. Volker Berghahn rightly argues that these journals' "anticommunism was not dogmatic, but favored dialogue, also with East European academics and intellectuals, and a de-escalation of the Soviet-American arms race."¹⁰³

In 1953, Stephen Spender, the main editor of *Encounter*, wrote to Czesław Miłosz and proposed that Miłosz serve *Encounter* with his experience, first, as an individual having been involved in the fight against censorship, second, as an émigré, and third, with his knowledge of the relevance of the Western engagement for the cause of freedom in the 'Other Europe.' The letter shows that Spender hoped for more support from Western intellectuals for the journal's future activity:

Dear Miłosz [...] We very much want you to write for *Encounter*. [...] Most English writers would feel sympathy for the intellectuals in Poland and Czechoslovakia at this moment. If they were

¹⁰¹ Carlisle, "Trois visites à Boris Pasternak"; Moravia, "Visite a Pasternak"; Jelenski, "Abram Tertz ou la voie de l'espoir"; Chiramonte, "La voix de Pasternak."

¹⁰² Burg, "The Cold War on the Literary Front"; Hayward, "Soviet Literature in the Doldrums"; Zr., "The Conscience of a Generation"; Ignotus, "The Revolution of the Word."

¹⁰³ Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, 140.

asked for such sympathy they would give it, together with a certain sense of moral obligation to do something. [...] What we would like is an article, in which you, with your background and experience, try to state in a personal way and as a Polish poet, what you conceive to be the struggle for freedom in the world. [...] Another thing you should certainly discuss is the extent to which today people living in a free country like ours should be morally involved in, and perhaps consider themselves responsible for, the suffering of other people in other parts of Europe. Then, from your experiences since you left Poland, I would like you to say something about what you think about English and European intellectuals. Are they living in a kind of dream?¹⁰⁴

This letter targets the intellectual in the Western sphere as a key figure able to change Western attitudes towards communism in general and the Soviet Union in particular. By drawing the attention of Western intellectuals to the destinies of their colleagues behind the Iron Curtain, Spender and like-minded intellectuals hoped to create a path towards a joint engagement against the ideological and cultural bipolarization of the world into power blocs. The first ‘open gates’ for early dissonant voices to reach the West can be found in the early collections of uncensored Russian works. As the circulation of Russian writings was dependent on their publication in the West, introductions and commentaries on the phenomenon of dissonant voices provide an insight into the individual as well as the general Western interest in the newly formed literary underground. The question “why the voice of this anonymous Russian is so important,” posed by Czesław Miłosz in an introduction to Andrei Sinyavsky’s work, seems central to the Western approach towards dissonant voices. Miłosz continues: “It is interesting to consider how far it bears witness to a ripening of new tendencies directed against the heritage of the Stalinist era, and also what prospects these new tendencies have of emerging triumphant.”¹⁰⁵

In contrast to the presumed “provincialism, lack of originality, and spiritual impoverishment” of Soviet writings, judged to have been so repellent to the Western reader, the new writings evoked associa-

¹⁰⁴ Letter by Stephen Spender to Czesław Miłosz, October 12, 1953. Czesław Miłosz Papers, Vault 489, Box 14, Folder 393, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library.

¹⁰⁵ Miłosz, “Introduction,” 142.

tions with Western literary traditions and the forgotten spiritual-literary past of nineteenth-century Russia.¹⁰⁶ Vassily Aksyonov argues persuasively that a possible reason for this new resonance was that the Western reader detected in the “new voices of Russia” a modern global perspective, discerning the influence of Western literature on these new works: “In the sixties, the writers of our generation became known as the new voices of Russia. We looked to world literature, already mesmerized and inspired by the new ideas, new sounds, new smells, and all that jazz of the renaissance.”¹⁰⁷ Just as Pasternak had succeeded in recreating “the real or imaginary Golden Age when absolute assurance and uncontrived and confident gestures were still possible,”¹⁰⁸ this new literature suggested a revival of the Russian occidental tradition. This was exactly what the Western reader had been looking for, and what they found in the new literature from the ‘Other Europe.’

Indeed, Western readers had long gained inspiration from Russian writers such as Fyodor Dostoevsky, Anton Chekhov, and Leo Tolstoy. Through new literary input from Russian non-conformist writers, the “Western European is immediately reminded,” as Stuart Hampshire argues, “of all that is best in his own past, of the great tradition.” The Western European had falsely come to think that the “extremes of violence and social change had made any real imaginative reconstruction of the recent past, any whole picture, seem impossible.”¹⁰⁹ But there must have been something in *Doctor Zhivago* that Western audiences were unable to find elsewhere. However, beyond the special spiritual character of the novel, its particular flavor of a “forbidden fruit” must also have played an important role. That Pasternak’s book had been banned from publication at home increased attention for it in the West.¹¹⁰ It was with great excitement that the West welcomed works like the anonymous *Poems from the Underground*, through which writers “for the first time since the beginning of Stalin’s long rule spoke in honest accents.”¹¹¹ That writings such as *Doctor Zhivago* or Sinyavsky’s *The Trial Begins* could be published in the Western press offered Western intellectuals an extraordi-

¹⁰⁶ Zavalishin, “Introduction,” 1.

¹⁰⁷ Aksyonov, “The Writer and His Past,” 330.

¹⁰⁸ Hampshire, “*Dr. Zhivago*: As From a Lost Culture,” 3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Burg, “The Cold War on the Literary Front,” 6.

¹¹¹ This is the title of a poetry collection. See “Editor’s Note: Poems from the Underground,” 1–6, and Zr., “The Conscience of a Generation,” 7.

nary “inside look at something the Soviets never wanted to be seen, and a sense of comradeship with the rebellious author.”¹¹² The American writer and literary critic Edmund Wilson wrote to William Shaw, the editor of *The New Yorker*, soon after the publication of *Doctor Zhivago*, touching upon the transnational nature of Pasternak’s fame in the West: “Do you know about the novel by Pasternak, which the Soviets are suppressing in its original form but which an Italian publisher is now publishing?”¹¹³ Indeed, it seems that a good deal of the novel’s reputation rested on Western reactions to Soviet efforts to prevent its publication.

Beyond the controversy, however, the book’s literary quality piqued the interest of Western readers. The novel’s inventive plot and lively language were perceived as extraordinary: “Pasternak is a first-rate figure—about the only one they now have.”¹¹⁴ The distinctive artistic quality of Soviet writings took center stage in their Western reception which focused on its dissonant character.¹¹⁵ The term ‘dissonance’ was used to describe the new forms of literary expression in the Soviet Union following the thaw. Originating from music, it referred to discordant sounds that are harsh to the ear. In the realm of literature and poetry, dissonance related to “voices outside the harmony of socialist realism.”¹¹⁶ As Max Hayward wrote:

Most of the voices represented here are dissonant, not in any political sense, but in that they do not speak in that trite and monotonous accent which, owing to the long and bitter years of Stalin’s dictatorship, is still regarded by many people in the West as the sole voice of Soviet literature.¹¹⁷

For Hayward, dissonance was understood in terms of artistic and aesthetic forms. Thus, writers of the thaw appealed to Western audiences not because of their political role, but rather because their literary con-

¹¹² Reimel, “Pasternak, Boris: Doctor Zhivago.”

¹¹³ Letter cited in Wilson, *Letters on Literature and Politics*, 582.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Max Hayward in particular used the term by titling an edited volume of underground literature *Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature*. Later the term would be replaced by dissonance, which would be commonly used as well as harshly debated by many uncensored writers.

¹¹⁶ Gibian, “Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature,” 605.

¹¹⁷ Hayward, “Introduction: Soviet Literature,” vii.

tributions restored artistic and human values that had been destroyed during the time of socialist realism.¹¹⁸

Although these works' dissonant qualities lay mostly in their themes and content, the decision to publish them always had political connotations. But this understanding of politics originated from a firm belief in human rights rather than in Cold War politics. These early publishing initiatives, whose core aim was to make dissonant literature visible, can be perceived as predecessors to the human rights groups of the late 1970s. As with human rights activists, Hayward explicitly wanted to give space to writers "who were murdered, hounded into silence, or otherwise persecuted (e.g. Babel, Pilnyak, and Pasternak)."¹¹⁹ He further explained that the Western reader should always take into account the political and ideological background in which Soviet literature was produced. Only by keeping in mind the pervasive ideological pressure exerted on Soviet writers could their courage and strength to oppose party demands be revealed. In 1983, when the importance of *samizdat* as a means of political opposition was widely acknowledged, Leonard Shapiro, an internationally renowned scholar of Russian politics at the London School of Economics, recalled a talk by Hayward in 1963, arguing for the immense role writers played in the soft deconstruction of totalitarian regimes from within. Quoting Hayward he wrote:

[T]he gains hitherto made by the Soviet writers in their struggle for greater independence, however relative and precarious this independence may be, are great enough to warrant the conclusion that a totalitarian regime can be challenged from within and to have demonstrated that a "monolithic" political structure is more fragile than was once thought. This, it will be recalled, was said before the birth of *samizdat*.¹²⁰

Herein lies the West's early acknowledgement of the political relevance of Soviet literature and its subsequent commitment to persecuted writers and their written word. The transfer of early dissonant literature to the West marked the beginning of cross-border publishing, which contributed to a rapprochement of the Eastern and Western spheres through lit-

¹¹⁸ Ibid., viii.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., vii.

¹²⁰ Shapiro, "Preface," in Hayward, *Writers in Russia*, xi.

erature. The re-emergence of critical and non-conformist Russian writings and their reintegration into the Western canon changed the West's image of Russian culture and literature.

AUTHORS ON TRIAL

In 1966 *tamizdat* was put on trial. Yuli Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky were condemned to labor camps for having published their writings in the West.¹²¹ The trial instigated a crucial change in the West's position vis-à-vis persecuted writers in the 'Other Europe.' While few Soviet writers dared stand up in defense of Pasternak, the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial produced an explosive public reaction—both inside and outside the Soviet sphere—that openly expressed disagreement with trials' cause and course. Soviet bureaucrats attempted to stifle critical public debate inside the country by publishing statements supporting the trial in the West by officially recognized Soviet writers. But these efforts were not successful for long.¹²²

Daniel and Sinyavsky belonged to a small circle of literary intellectuals who participated in a mutual quest for more literary and aesthetic freedom. Using the pseudonyms Abram Tertz and Nikolai Arzhak, Sinyavsky and Daniel published a series of texts abroad with Western and émigré publishers.¹²³ Sinyavsky published his first work in 1959 in the West;¹²⁴ Daniel only began publishing works in the West in 1962.¹²⁵

¹²¹ See Hayward, *On Trial: The Soviet State Versus "Abram Tertz" and "Nikolai Arzhak."*

¹²² Pospelovsky, "Restalinization or Destalinization?" 316.

¹²³ Among the publishers were Hayward, the Russian émigré Boris Filippov and the Polish émigré Jerzy Giedroyc, as well as publishing houses such as Pantheon Books, Random House, and Harper and Row in New York, Inter-Language Literary Associates in Washington, Collins in London, and the Polish émigré journal *Kultura* in Paris.

¹²⁴ Sinyavsky's first overseas publication was *On Socialist Realism*, which appeared in Polish translation in a 1959 issue of *Kultura* (reprinted the following year in English in New York). *The Trial Begins* circulated in an English version in London and New York in 1960; *The Icicle* in London in 1963; *The Makepeace Experiment* in 1964; and *Fantastic Stories* in Polish translation in 1961 and in English in 1963.

¹²⁵ Daniel started his Western publishing career with his famous article "This Is Moscow Speaking" (in Russian), which was published with the help of Boris in Washington. He also published with a Russian émigré press in Munich and in *Kultura*.

When the Soviet authorities found out who were behind the pseudonyms Arzhak and Tertz, the two writers were arrested in 1965 and tried in a show trial for anti-Soviet slander. On February 14, 1966, Daniel was sentenced to five years of hard labor and Sinavsky to seven years. Sinavsky was released in 1971 and emigrated to France in 1973. Daniel refused to emigrate and returned to Kaluga where he had been living before his captivity.

The original writings of these authors reached the West through illegal channels, and the unofficial trial transcript also became a 'publication abroad.' In addition, Alexander Ginzburg and Yuri Galanskov compiled a four hundred page document that chronicled not only Daniel and Sinyavsky's arrest, but also described the manifold public reactions to the trial. The text was first circulated illegally in the USSR,¹²⁶ before an unofficial transcript was smuggled out of the Soviet Union and published by the Inter-Language Literary Association in New York (1966), by a Russian émigré publishing house,¹²⁷ and by Possev in Frankfurt (1967).¹²⁸ It was subsequently translated into English and published by Max Hayward and Leopold Labedz.¹²⁹ *The White Book*, as it became known, revealed information about the trial and the Soviet coercion of writers to Western audiences. Soviet officials immediately perceived the publication as slander,¹³⁰ and they argued that the translated version rep-

¹²⁶ "The Indictment in the Case of A. I. Ginzburg, Yu. T. Galanskov, A. A. Dobrovolsky, and V. I. Lashkova," 45.

¹²⁷ Tertz, *Sinyavsky e Daniel na Skamie Podsudemix* (*Sinavsky and Daniel on the Defendant's Bench*). It was Boris Filippov who set about making available the works of writers who could not be published in the Soviet Union. To this purpose, Filippov founded the Inter-Language Literary Associates, which used money from cultural organizations such as the Tower Foundation to arrange the publication, under varying auspices, of this wide range of literature. Together with Gleb Struve, professor of Russian literature at the University of California, Berkeley, Filippov edited and published the works of Sinyavsky and Daniel.

¹²⁸ Ginzburg, *Belaya kniga po delu Sinyavskogo i Iulii Danielya* (*Weissbuch in Sachen Sinjavskij und Daniel*).

¹²⁹ Labedz and Hayward, eds., *On Trial: The Case of Sinyavsky (Tertz) and Daniel (Arzhak)*; Hayward, *On Trial: The Soviet State Versus "Abram Tertz" and "Nikolai Arzhak"*; Ginzburg, *Le livre blanc de l'affaire Siniavsky-Daniel*.

¹³⁰ See his letter in *The Demonstration in Pushkin Square*, 134–35. Even if this letter only addresses the trials of Bukovsky, Delaunay, and Kushev, it offers an insight into the conflict of the Soviet court in sentencing someone for having published the record of a trial in the West.

resented a biased distortion of the facts. As parts of it were published by the Russian émigré journal *Grani*, *The White Book*'s authors were accused of being in close contact with the anti-Soviet émigré organization NTS (National Alliance of Russian Solidarists), to which the journal was connected.¹³¹ When Ginzburg and Galanskov were revealed to be the project's initiators, they were put on trial in 1968 in what became known as the Trial of the Four, where they were sentenced to five years imprisonment along with several co-conspirators.

The book's monotone, documentary tone reveals an important aim of the emerging Soviet human rights movement: to give truthful information about Soviet human rights abuses. The Russian underground writer Ludmilla Alexeyeva even went so far as to establish a direct connection between the first appeals published in *The White Book* and the later emergence of the human rights movement.¹³² The affair surrounding the trial was considered seminal to the materialization of an organized opposition movement. As Peter Reddaway puts it, the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel, respectively "a brilliant critic and exponent of the grotesque" and "a writer of powerful poems and stories," played "a key role in the emergence of the Democratic movement."¹³³ Compiling *The White Book* presented a more objective picture of the trial and the reactions of Western intellectuals.¹³⁴

His own aim, Ginzburg pointed out during the Trial of the Four, had not been to publish the text in the West. Rather, he hoped it would "reach the higher levels in our state."¹³⁵ He wanted the unjust sen-

¹³¹ "Ginzburg had ties with the espionage and intelligence organization NTS," cited in "Speech by State Prosecutor," in *The Trial of the Four*, 368. See also 53, where the charge is outlined as establishing links with the NTS, transmitting material to the West, and illegally circulating anti-Soviet material in the Soviet Union.

¹³² Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 279.

¹³³ Reddaway, *Uncensored Russia*, 61.

¹³⁴ As the terminology "White Book" refers to an authoritative report or official documents compiled by a national government, the usage of the term in context of the Sinyavsky trial was meant to represent the official logic as accurately as possible. The term "Black Book" was originally coined by the Russian book *Chornaya Kniga*, a compilation of non-official documentary reports on the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust and the participation of Jews in the resistance movement against the Nazis during World War II.

¹³⁵ Litvinov, "Interrogation of Alexander Ginzburg," in *The Trial of the Four*, 112.

tences commuted. *The White Book* comprised appeals and letters by Sinyavsky's and Daniel's families who wanted to ameliorate their situation.¹³⁶ Further accounts from publishers and friends testified to their wish to publish abroad. These accounts outlined the writers' interest in Western culture and referred to earlier examples of Russian writers who had published in the West, as well as to the difficulties they experienced after Soviet officials realized that. These testimonies, which give the impression of speaking in the name of the authors, are highly revealing about Sinyavsky's and Daniel's desire to become part of the Western literary world. One of these voices was Hélène Peltier-Zamoyska. As the daughter of a French naval attaché she not only smuggled *Doctor Zhivago* and works by Sinyavsky out of the country, but had also helped facilitate their publication in the West.¹³⁷ She explained Sinyavsky's image of the West: "The West was to him the world, hard to imagine, of all that intellectual freedom, of that freedom to experiment in literature and art, which he needed so badly and so painfully lacked. Yet, paradoxically, he was if anything repelled by Western notions of the freedom of the individual as the highest good."¹³⁸ Reflecting the logic of Western fascination with independent literature from the 'Other Europe,' Zamoyska interpreted Sinyavsky's interest in the West as curiosity about whether it offered "a new outlook to offer the world, an eventual alternative to Communism, a vision which could 'renew the face of the earth' and for which men would be ready to die."¹³⁹

Despite the attraction of the West as a space of real artistic freedom, Zamoyska argued that Sinyavsky did not seem like a candidate for emigration at the time. However, since he "believed in the author's right to reach his public," and did not see an opportunity to publish his works in the Soviet Union, Sinyavsky decided to follow Pasternak's example. Zamoyska praised the latter's "courage in sending his manuscript abroad, his deep conviction that he had a perfect right to do so, as well as a positive duty to 'bear witness to his time.'" A "great patriot and a great poet," Pasternak inspired Sinyavsky to ask Zamoyska's help in publishing his books abroad, declaring that "[t]his was a turning point in his life."¹⁴⁰ Zamoyska draws a direct link between Sinyavsky's decision to follow

¹³⁶ Compare Rothberg, *The Heirs of Stalin*, 207.

¹³⁷ Pasternak, *Lettres à mes amis françaises*.

¹³⁸ Zamoyska, "Sinyavsky, the Man and the Writer," 53.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

Pasternak's example and her own role as a kind of unofficial literary publisher of his works. Pasternak's fears about publishing abroad reflected her own about having initiated the—officially forbidden—Western publications of Sinyavsky's works: "He was sure that his own danger was even greater than Pasternak's, since he was unknown and could not expect public opinion to be roused on his behalf. He expected to disappear into a concentration camp and not be heard of again."¹⁴¹

Beyond the general danger of making his work available in the West, Zamoyska explained her difficulty in finding an appropriate publisher. Sinyavsky had pleaded with her to find a publisher that was not 'against' the Soviet Union. Despite the highly politicized nature of publishing abroad, she argued that "Sinyavsky's decision had nothing to do with politics."¹⁴² She wanted to fulfill his wish that his writings not be used for propaganda, and interpreted his image of Western public opinion as follows: "He was turning for help to that distant, scarcely imaginable world in which art and literature were valued for their own sake and not for the political use to be made out of them—he hoped that his gesture as a writer would be recognized as such."¹⁴³ During his trial, Sinyavsky made a comment that contrasted with Zamoyska's interpretation. Even if his remarks resulted from the pressures of the ordeal, they reveal an important difficulty of publishing abroad. "I never regarded my publications abroad as a means of establishing contact with a reading public," he said. "It was just a way of preserving them for the few people who, maybe, sometime, might find something of interest in these writings. This is literature for myself and for a few others, wherever they may live or in whatever age."¹⁴⁴

Sinyavsky wrote in Russian and addressed his thoughts to the Russian reader with whom he shared common experiences. A publication in the West could hardly have satisfied his search for a readership. From Sinyavsky's point of view, a foreign audience that reads his books in translation did not fulfill his desire to introduce new thoughts into Soviet society. But the fact that he published abroad reveals a hope that his writings would offer a message to Western readers. Writers like Pasternak set an example for publishing abroad. In 1979, Sinyavsky wrote that "*Doctor*

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ "Examination of Andrei Sinyavsky," in Hayward, *On Trial: The Soviet State versus "Abram Tertz" and "Nikolai Arzhak,"* 116.

Zhivago was [a book] that opened people's eyes to what was going on in the Soviet Union."¹⁴⁵

In her recollections, Zamoyska expresses the idea that since "Western readers of Soviet books missed the depth, spirituality, and preoccupation with philosophy and metaphysics which had struck them in Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, they wondered if the intellectual life of Russia had indeed become impoverished and was now less deep."¹⁴⁶ Western readers, then, were surprised when they first read pieces like *Fantasticheskiye Povesti* (*Fantastic Stories*) that counteracted their image of a monotonous Soviet literature. When it became public that these writings had been produced inside the Soviet Union and not in exile, Western intellectuals were reportedly surprised. In 1983, the British literary critic John Bayley recalled that "[b]oth abroad and in Russia it was assumed these stories must be the work of some émigré purporting to write from inside, rather than, as turned out to be the case, the writings of a young man nurtured entirely in the Stalinist socialist mold."¹⁴⁷

Furthermore, Zamoyska evoked the literary work's moral impact on the poorly-informed Western reader. Sinyavsky's and Daniel's work would inform Western audiences of the perspective of a new generation that would counteract Soviet and Western caricatures of each other: "Only voices from inside Russia could help us to understand the problems and the attitudes of the Russians."¹⁴⁸ The writings' emotional impact and their clandestine, risky migration to the West were what mattered. Indeed, their daring production and circulation caused a sensation. Zamoyska recounts her search for publishers that would meet Sinyavsky's expectations:

I was bound of course by my friend's request not to choose an anti-Soviet publisher. What exactly did this mean? It is an equivocal term. I interpreted it as best as I could. I looked for a publisher whose attitude to the Soviet Union was neither blinded by anti-Soviet prejudice nor equally blinded by subservience to the Soviet government.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Sinyavsky et al., eds., "Solzhenitsyn and Russian Nationalism."

¹⁴⁶ Zamoyska, "Sinyavsky, the Man and the Writer," 61–62.

¹⁴⁷ Bayley, "The Upper Depths."

¹⁴⁸ Zamoyska, "Sinyavsky, the Man and the Writer," 67.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 68.

In the end, she found Jerzy Giedroyc from *Kultura* and Boris Filippov. She praised their willingness to publish texts they had not yet seen based only “on their literary merits and out of sympathy with their need for freedom of expression.”¹⁵⁰ Zamoyska’s aim to further freedom of expression represented the first sign of an emerging awareness on the part of certain Western intellectuals of human rights issues, in particular, of writers’ in the Soviet sphere. A close friend of Giedroyc, married to a Pole, and sentimentally attached to Russia, Zamoyska thought that “Poles and Frenchmen should help to bring the artists and writers of East and West closer together”—a task Sinyavsky and Daniel achieved by publishing abroad.¹⁵¹ Soviet officials still perceived émigrés and their publishing houses as the breeding ground for anti-Soviet propaganda.

The transcript of the trial, also part of *The White Book*, offers extraordinary insight into the Soviet government’s methods in dealing with authors who published their writings abroad. It reveals that the Soviet authorities planned to try the pair for having published their works under pen-names. But since such a penal code did not exist, the actual charge was based on an argument of anti-Soviet slander, of having subverted the Soviet regime by means of writing and circulating their texts. But as Daniel argued in his final plea: “We are guilty not for what we have written, but for having sent our works abroad.”¹⁵² Having published their writings under pseudonyms played an important role in the trial’s course.

The conversations between the prosecutor, the judge, and the two writers reveal the various core arguments the procedure revolved around. Central were questions about the “illegality” of sending books abroad; the use of “conspiracist networks to smuggle their writings out of the country”; the “unethical” character of their behavior; the “material profit” from their publishing activities in the West; and, most importantly, the use of their writings by the “bourgeois press” for “anti-Soviet propaganda.” The question about the motivation of publishing abroad played a rather minor role. A short exchange between Sinyavsky and the prosecutor testifies to the former’s unwillingness to openly formulate his views on the Soviet publishing industry. The fact that he found himself charged for having published abroad prevented him from expressing his original motives for gaining a readership.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² “Final Plea by Yuli Daniel,” in Labedz and Hayward, eds., *On Trial: The Case of Sinyavsky (Tertz) and Daniel (Arzhak)*, 194.

Prosecutor: Why did you send abroad the three things for which you are being charged?

Sinyavsky: I told you: because they could not be published here.

Prosecutor: I can't blame our publishers.¹⁵³

During another interrogation, Sinyavsky elaborates his point of view by adding more crucial arguments:

Sinyavsky: I had only one thing in mind in sending all my works abroad: that they should be published. I had no political aims, I was guided only by my literary interests and my needs as a creative writer.¹⁵⁴

When the prosecutor questions Sinyavsky about how he sent his writings abroad, he focuses on two things: the smuggling and the use of a pseudonym. While the scandal over *Doctor Zhivago*'s appearance in the West did not lead to an official trial, Sinyavsky's and Daniel's case shows how only a few years later the Soviet authorities relied on new legal arguments in their prosecution. The prosecutor engages Sinyavsky in a discussion in which two questions—"How did you get them abroad?" and "Why did you conceal your name?"—represent the core accusations. The conversation develops as follows:

Sinyavsky: I sent them out with the help of Zamoyska, whom I knew when we were students together at the university.

Prosecutor: Did you send your manuscripts illegally?

Sinyavsky: I sent them out unofficially, but not illegally.

Prosecutor: How would you describe the manner in which you chose to send them?

Sinyavsky: As "unofficial." I don't think it was illegal and I do not know the implication of this word in the juridical sense.¹⁵⁵

Daniel's interrogation follows the same logic:

¹⁵³ "Examination of Andrei Sinyavsky," in Hayward, *On Trial: The Soviet State Versus 'Abram Tertz' and 'Nikolai Arzhak'*, 114–15.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

Prosecutor: Why [...] did you send it abroad under a pseudonym and by illegal means?

Daniel: I sent it out to be published; that was an adequate reason for me. If I had been a physician or an engineer, I would have published it under my own name. But I am a translator. If it had become known that I was being published abroad, I would have lost my translation work.¹⁵⁶

A bit further on in the discussion, the judge refutes Daniel's comparison of himself with other Soviet authors being published abroad, only "under a pseudonym": "[t]he others are honest writers who never sent anything abroad. That's the difference!"¹⁵⁷

From the interrogation it becomes clear Sinyavsky's and Daniel's circumvention of official channels to publish abroad carried significant weight. In the eyes of the Soviet officials, their use of a pseudonym revealed their criminal character. The conspiratorial networks they established in order to guarantee their literature's transfer to the West only further underlined the 'illegality' of their behavior. Their contact with Zamoyska was perceived as highly conspiratory. Daniel and Sinyavsky are repeatedly asked how and when they met her, how the transfer took place, and by which means the texts were smuggled out. The prosecutor also brings up the question of their unethical behavior towards the Soviet Union. Addressing them as citizens, he asks: "Is it ethical for a Soviet citizen to send abroad through a foreigner things that, to use your own expression, have a political tinge?"¹⁵⁸ Daniel agrees that publishing under a pseudonym was against a writer's ethics and expresses some regret about having done so. But he stands firm in defending his right to publish abroad.

Beyond the political aspects of publishing abroad, the authorities' discussion of *tamizdat* often focused on the financial or material motivation to be published and paid by a Western publishing house.¹⁵⁹ This

¹⁵⁶ "Examination of Yuli Daniel," in Hayward, *On Trial: The Soviet State versus 'Abram Tertz' and 'Nikolai Arzhak'*, 71.

¹⁵⁷ "Examination of Andrei Sinyavsky," 128.

¹⁵⁸ "Examination of Yuli Daniel," 50.

¹⁵⁹ The economy of *tamizdat* has been largely neglected in research until now. However, it played a major role in so far as publishing a work abroad or giving an interview to a Western newspaper or radio station was often done out of financial considerations. An article in the West often paid as much as a full month's salary. See Domber, *Supporting the Revolution*.

argument also appears in the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel in a rather ridiculous manner when the public accuser A. Vasilyev reminds the judge about how Sinyavsky profited from his publications in the West:

Vasilyev: Yesterday it came out that Sinyavsky received from his clients two jackets, two sweaters, a white shirt, and some rubber boots, as well as something for his wife and for his son. Not very much you might say. But I think it is a lot.¹⁶⁰

When Sinyavsky refers to the presents he received from his French friends and those he gave in return, Vasilyev responds: "How come so much money for two books?"¹⁶¹ On January 3, the commentator Boris Belitski publicly accused Sinyavsky and Daniel on Radio Moscow of profiting financially from their endeavors abroad: "The two men have clearly been tempted by the possibility of making easy money and building up a reputation of sorts."¹⁶² To receive royalties from capitalist countries was perceived as an act against Soviet morale. Even in Pasternak's times, receiving royalties from the West was considered a crime. In 1961, one year after Pasternak's death, his mistress Olga Ivinskaya was arrested and sentenced to eight years in a labor camp for having clandestinely received his foreign royalties.

Beside the financial profit that could result from a 'publication over there,' Soviet officials perceived the transfer of uncensored thought to the capitalist West as playing into the hands of the ideological enemy. The Soviet state risked appearing in a bad light in the eyes of the so-called bourgeois press. The prosecutor reproached Daniel for his carelessness in allowing his enemies to use his writings for anti-Soviet propaganda. As the Western cultural sphere was perceived as a territory highly influenced by anti-Soviet activists, publication in the West carried the danger of harming the Soviet Union's image. Soviet officials feared how Western publishers framed Soviet literature, expressing a great interest in the political orientation of Sinyavsky's and Daniel's publishers. Questions about the various editions, their publication dates, and introductions are brought up: "Did you know which publishers were printing your books, and with what sort of introductions?" Acknowledging that he had been

¹⁶⁰ "Examination of Sinyavsky," x.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁶² Cited in Brumberg, "Traitors in the Dock," 72.

interested in being published in the West, Daniel insists that he had no knowledge about the actual publishers of his books. "When I gave these things to Peltier, I did not know where, when, and in what country they would be published. The final stage of any literary work is publication. You can interpret this as you wish—as vanity or as excessive pride."¹⁶³ After it became clear to him that his works were being exploited by 'bourgeois' propaganda, Sinyavsky dares to invalidate the court's usage of doubtfully neutral Western material in the indictment:

I still have no full picture about Western reaction to my works, but I have a strong impression that bourgeois propaganda indulges in wishful thinking. The epithet "anti-Soviet" is often used in the West for sensation purposes. I have no confidence in the objectivity of the investigative authorities—they have included in the indictment materials about my arrest and comments on my works published in the bourgeois press after my arrest [...] and these materials are produced as objective proof of my anti-Soviet activities. In the West they have published stories that I am from an Old Believer family, that I was a very close friend of Pasternak, etc. God knows what else they may have written about me there. There must be objective ways of judging foreign reaction to my works.¹⁶⁴

Sinyavsky does not deny the likely existence of highly politicized reviews and commentaries on his works in the West, but he differentiates between those publishers who actually published his works and those who only commented on them. He strongly objects to being called an "anti-Soviet author," as some labeled him in the Western press. "I know that some reviewers describe me as nothing more than an 'unorthodox Soviet writer,'" he says, "[t]his comes closer to my own estimate of my work."¹⁶⁵

In his final speech, the state prosecutor summarizes the official point of view and repeats all aspects of the charge without considering the replies given by Sinyavsky and Daniel. His verdict is that reactionary, émigré publishers had exploited Sinyavsky and Daniel. Their works were

¹⁶³ "Examination of Yuli Daniel," 71.

¹⁶⁴ "Examination of Andrei Sinyavsky," 119.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

clearly anti-Soviet; they had been sent abroad for no other reason than propaganda, and Radio Liberty's broadcasts of the trial were interpreted as ultimate proof of their anti-Soviet character. Radio Liberty played an important role in making the authors' works available to a Soviet audience, reporting installments from works such as *The Trial Begins*. In the mid-1970s, Radio Liberty created the feature program *From the Other Shore*, which was devoted to reading excerpts from Sinyavsky and other Soviet writers. Following his emigration to France, Sinyavsky became an important contributor to the station, frequently appearing behind its microphones. The officials further argued that, as Sinyavsky and Daniel had played their "anti-Soviet lampoons" into the hands of "our enemies," they presented a "social danger" in times of "ideological" or, even better, "psychological" warfare:

the entire propaganda machine of international reaction, connected as it is with the intelligence services, is being brought into play to contaminate our youth with the poison of nihilism, to get its tentacles into our intellectual circles by hook or by crook, to sow the seeds of antagonism through such individuals as Sinyavsky and Daniel, to entangle in their nets if only a few people who have sold their pens, their honor, and dignity as Soviet citizens, for dollars, for pieces of silver. [...] Our enemies have understood the nature of the poisoned weapon handed them by these renegades. This is shown by what the bourgeois press has said about them, by all the praise showered on them, and the money put aside for them in a bourgeois bank. If the enemy praises someone to us, there can be no good in such a person.¹⁶⁶

Sinyavsky and Daniel were considered dangerous puppets in the theater of ideological warfare between the two worlds. The prosecutor's speech ends with a comparison between the freedoms of the 'bourgeois' Western press and the real freedoms of the Soviet press:

It is not for them to accuse us of having no freedom of the press.
We don't have to say at this time what sort of a freedom of the

¹⁶⁶ "Speech by State Prosecutor O. P. Tyomushkin," in Hayward, *On Trial: The Soviet State Versus 'Abram Tertz' and 'Nikolai Arzhak'*, 167.

press they have. [...] Freedom of the press is not an abstract notion. We have real freedom, we have freedom to march with and behind the people, to educate the people, particularly the young people through literature.¹⁶⁷

In his final plea, Daniel raises the objection that it was impossible for a Soviet writer to stay out of politics. Although knowing his plea would be futile, Daniel again poses the question about the role of literature in Soviet society: “What is propaganda and what is literature? The viewpoint of the prosecution is that literature is a form of propaganda, and there are only two kinds of propaganda: pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet. If literature is simply un-Soviet, it means that it is anti-Soviet.”¹⁶⁸ Writing in an un-Soviet manner and thus not reproducing the official literary codes was enough to be stigmatized as an anti-Soviet writer.

Yet, the condemnation of Sinyavsky and Daniel as slanderous writers and the public reaction to it gave rise to a new collective concern for writers, both inside and outside the Soviet Union. In an article for *The Observer* in 1975, Andrei Sakharov identifies their trial as the trigger for “a kind of chain reaction” of an unofficial campaign in the USSR, involving thousands of people who realized it was not only a question of defending the accused but also “freedom of thought and speech in general” in their country.¹⁶⁹ The emerging interest in human rights propelled activist groups to claim certain rights. One of the campaign’s most prestigious outlets was, as will be later shown, the Moscow *samizdat* periodical *The Chronicle of Current Events*. Yet, Sakharov acknowledges that the actual human rights movement was, in fact, extremely isolated from the majority of people; its geographic fragmentation and reliance on secrecy meant it could only be effective in the West.¹⁷⁰ The West afforded publicity and support—for instance, by means of public appeals—that prevented the human rights movement inside the Soviet Union from sinking into complete isolation.

However, publicity in the West was not as neutral. Just as the Soviet regime labeled literature that did not follow the exact logic of socialist realism as “anti-Soviet,” underground texts in the West were often read primarily for their political message. Even if authors stressed their books’

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 167–77.

¹⁶⁸ Eremin, “Attacks on the Defendants,” 212.

¹⁶⁹ Sakharov, “Why I Speak Out Alone,” 19.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

literary character, Western readers often limited their attention to those books that symbolized illegal literary activity. Boris Shragin observes that these non-conformist writers were known “chiefly for their suffering, not for their ideas.” Reports detailed the authorities’ treatment of prisoners, neglecting the writers’ ideas. More energy was spent defending freedom of speech than in comprehending the writers’ positions, producing a Western image of a group of dissidents united by a “critical attitude toward the dominant regime.”¹⁷¹ This Western attitude resulted in a distorted image of non-conformist literary life inside the Eastern Bloc.

The main message Western intellectuals picked up from the variety of uncensored literary documents from the ‘Other Europe’ was a belief in the necessity to further promote the struggle for artistic freedom and human rights. Sinyavsky’s and Daniel’s literary reputation in the West was closely tied to non-literary, political factors. The trial aroused strong objections from the international public. Even before it started, some Western intellectuals had already loudly formulated their dissatisfaction with the Soviet treatment of Sinyavsky and Daniel, and had published international appeals in the biggest Western newspapers. Why did such an outcry rise from the intellectual community in Western capitals following the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial? What did they hope for when publishing appeals and writing letters to the responsible Soviet officials? In his public denouncement of Daniel and Sinyavsky, the Soviet literary critic Dimitri Eremin reflects on the fascination the trial held not only for foreign intellectuals but also for a large group of Russian writers who publicly expressed their criticism. He was astonished that the trial had animated such “excitement among the evil cohorts of the enemies” of the Soviet Union. Eremin suggests that unsavory individuals—a code for Western intellectuals—sought to exploit writers in the name of defending the Soviet intelligentsia.¹⁷² Public appeals were one avenue where the plight of Soviet writers was publicized.

PUBLIC PROTESTS AND APPEALS

The Western intellectual community believed that protests and appeals for clemency in the East and West would protect persecuted writers

¹⁷¹ Shragin, “Escapes From Freedom.”

¹⁷² Eremin, “Attacks on the Defendants,” 212.

and increase their visibility.¹⁷³ In 1966 Günter Grass, Hannah Arendt, Peter Härtling and Arthur Miller published an open letter in *The Times* where they called attention to and condemned the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel:

Should this appeal fail we shall see no other way but to call upon the writers and artists of the world to conduct an international cultural boycott of a country which chooses to put itself beyond the pale of civilization until such time as it abandons the barbaric treatment of its writers and artists.¹⁷⁴

A year later, a similar group of intellectuals in the West published a "Declaration," in which intellectuals such as Graham Greene and Ignazio Silone claimed that Sinyavsky's and Daniel's "fate is of deep concern to intellectuals throughout the world" and represented the paradigmatic modern intellectual "cause célèbre."¹⁷⁵ The creation of a transnational literary community lay at the heart of the West's moral support for the victimized yet courageous writers beyond the Iron Curtain: "Protests and appeals for clemency from intellectuals in East and West have shown the solidarity of the international *community of letters*."¹⁷⁶

As Stephen Spender put it, it was this imagined "community of scientists, writers, and scholars thinking about the same problems and applying to them the same human values" that agitated in the name of the writer.¹⁷⁷ The intellectual freedom and courage Sinyavsky and Daniel had shown writing according to their own understanding of literature and publishing abroad were crucial in attracting the attention of their Western colleagues. The circulation of their trial transcripts and additional original writings certainly played an important role in the trial's immense popularity. The availability of *tamizdat* materials in the West helped the

¹⁷³ Labedz and Hayward, eds., *On Trial: The Case of Sinyavsky (Tertz) and Daniel (Arzhak)*, 7.

¹⁷⁴ "A Letter to The Times," (London, December 16, 1969), in Labedz, *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record*, 224.

¹⁷⁵ "Declaration" by Günter Grass, Graham Greene, Francois Maurice, Arthur Miller, and Ignazio Silone, in Labedz and Hayward, eds., *On Trial: The Case of Sinyavsky (Tertz) and Daniel (Arzhak)*, 7.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Spender, "With Concern for Those Not Free," 11.

Western reader form an opinion about Soviet dealings with uncensored writers.

Alexander Ginzburg introduced the *The White Book's* German edition by stating that public and international outcries after Sinyavsky's and Daniel's sentences had proven the need to make the materials widely available to the public.¹⁷⁸ He hoped that the "voice of the public opinion" would "not disappear in silence" as long as the two authors were still imprisoned.¹⁷⁹ What Ginzburg did not know was that he would soon be charged for having compiled and published *The White Book* in an unauthorized version, with the cooperation of the Possev publishing house in Frankfurt, in the subsequent Trial of the Four. Along with Yuri Galanskov, Vera Lashkova, and Alexander Dobrovolsky, he was charged with anti-Soviet activities including the writers' involvement in the underground journal *Phoenix* and *The White Book*. The case represents a key moment in the creation of coordinated publicity thrusts both inside and outside the Soviet Bloc. Widespread public appeals followed. Many Soviet intellectuals sent "individual and collective letters to various juridical, governmental, and party organs," appealing to the power elite to denounce the public "trampling on man" in the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁰

A year before setting up the Alexander Herzen Foundation in 1969, Karel van het Reve had attended the Trial of the Four in the winter of 1967–1968, as his daughter remembers. A Moscow correspondent of the Dutch newspaper, *Het Parool*, van het Reve availed himself of the excellent opportunities at the trial to meet Russian non-conformist writers. As the trial was closed for outside publicity, "Andrei Amalrik and Pavel Litvinov were like my father [Karel van het Reve], standing outside the courtroom for hours a day. They became friends."¹⁸¹ Right after the trial Pavel Litvinov and Larisa Bogoraz, the wife of Yuli Daniel, wrote a letter of protest. On January 13, 1968, the letter was printed in *The New York Times*, in which they not only appealed to Soviet public opinion, but also "to world public opinion," asking for the letter "to be published

¹⁷⁸ See Ginzburg, "Vom Moskauer Herausgeber," 7. Translation from German by the author.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Anderson, "12 in Soviet Tell Reds' Parley Kremlin is 'Trampling on Man,'" 1.

¹⁸¹ Correspondence with Jozien Driessen van het Reve. December 9, 2013. Report available in the archive of the author.

and broadcast by radio as soon as possible.”¹⁸² The letter was signed by the authors with their full addresses, which posed a great risk to them. Van het Reve took the letters to Amsterdam, annotated them, and prepared them for publication. In 1969 they appeared under the title *Letters and Telegrams to Pavel M. Litvinov* in Dordrecht, representing “a forerunner, a ‘zero’ publication of the many red booklets of the AHF that followed.”¹⁸³ Van het Reve took not these letters only, but also many other manuscripts when he left Moscow in August 1968. Still, the trial letters seem to have been the first he published in the West. What this publication and the loud public outcry after the trial show manifest is that the most striking effect of these trials was their failure to defame the writers and silence their international supporters. Parallel to the letters van het Reve published, Pavel Litvinov and Peter Reddaway also compiled all materials that could be obtained to document The Trial of the Four, publishing them in 1972 with Longman in London.

By means of such Western publications, trials inside the Soviet Bloc led to a chain reaction of public appeals. The publications meant that the old “fearful sense of isolation” writers suffered from was replaced by a “sense of community” that inspired the “courage to risk prison.”¹⁸⁴ Instead of submission, the trials evoked open defiance. Activists inside the Soviet Union started to fight for their rights “from the prisoner’s dock, on the streets, in underground books and magazines,” including foreign media sources.¹⁸⁵ They found the courage to assert their rights. The use of public spaces to “throw flowers on paddy wagons, demonstrate outside courtrooms, and assemble in public squares carrying placards” mirrored a new culture of public grievances and complaints.¹⁸⁶ The writers’ dissatisfaction with the refusal of their most basic rights provoked public criticism. While public complaints were brutally and successfully silenced under Stalin, the thaw gave rise to new forms of communication between the previously powerless and the authorities.

¹⁸² “Text of Appeal Denouncing Trial of Four Russians,” 8.

¹⁸³ Driessen van het Reve. December 9, 2013.

¹⁸⁴ Blake, “This Is the Winter of Moscow’s Dissent,” SM25.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. Most recently the Cultures of Grievances conference addressed the grievances as representations of a new legal genre. <http://culturesofgrievance.wordpress.com> (accessed December 4, 2013). This culture of complaints would find its climax during Gorbachev’s *perestroika*. See Ries, *Russian Talk*, 179.

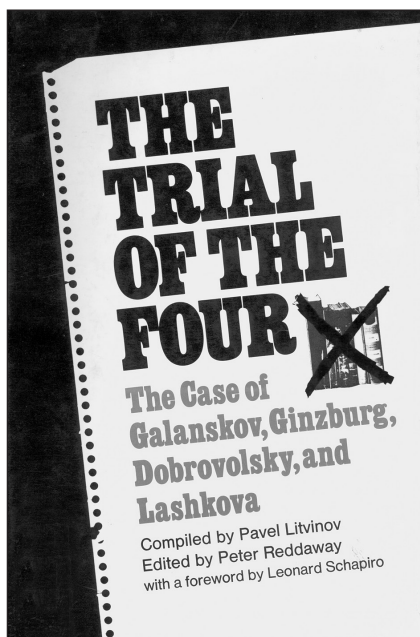


Figure 1: Cover of Pavel Litvinov, *The Trial of the Four: The Case of Galanskov, Ginzburg, Dobrovolsky and Lashkova*. New York: Viking Press, 1972. Library Collection of Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

Western intellectuals' disagreement with the treatment of their Russian colleagues carried far less personal risks, as they could complain from afar. Their appeals to the dominant, powerful elite beyond the Iron Curtain were morally sanctioned by the prevailing consensus in their respective countries and contributed to the improvement of their social standing. A group of Western intellectuals, amongst them Norman Mailer and Hannah Arendt, thought it fatal to consider the destiny of writers in the East as irrelevant to the West. Instead, they stressed the need to see the fate of writers inside the Eastern Bloc as the ground of the West's development: "[o]ur worries concern to the same degree ourselves as our literary friends in the Soviet Union." This time the West was obliged to recognize it was Sinyavsky and Daniel "who, perhaps for the first time," had initiated "a dialogue"

between East and West.¹⁸⁷ The signatories demanded an end to the patronizing attitude of the Western public to the poor, imprisoned writers from Europe's forgotten corners. When "today, books arrive from over there and speak to us directly, without intermediaries, in a great, universal, modern, fully adult language," the Western reader should not be shocked, "turn a blind eye," or "talk of a political sensation." On the other hand, anyone in the West who accepted dispassionately that "Sinyavsky and Daniel are rotting in a forced labor camp" was running the risk of "waking up to the embarrassment of having failed to see and

¹⁸⁷ Ginzburg, "Brief an den Ministerpraesidenten Kossygin," 29. Translation from German by the author.

the shame of having failed to act.”¹⁸⁸ They called upon the Western intellectual to plea for the imprisoned and powerless writers in the ‘Other Europe,’ rather than appear as a cultural imperialist.

Publishing their literature and furthering a dialogues between writers on equal grounds was one way to reach this goal. With time, Western intellectuals increasingly identified with the role of providing a bridge to Western audiences. In 1971 Michael Scammell, Solzhenitsyn’s biographer, introduced his compilation *Russia’s Other Writers* by giving the names of Western reviews that published *tamizdat*: “There has been a revival, or a reaffirmation, of the idea of a single community.”¹⁸⁹ Periodical names such as *Bridges* and *Aerial Ways* reflected this sense of transnational community-building. He explained the possibilities inherent in literary exchanges for both sides:

Movements such as these have a two-fold resonance. Friends and colleagues in the Soviet Union become aware of an alternative life and system “over there” and feel a personal link with it, even if unable to act in any way. This strengthens any independent leanings they might have. The emigration, on the other hand, receives fresh forces, fresh information, and is confirmed in its efforts—or persuaded to change its emphasis—by what it learns. In this way we have reached the situation pertaining today.¹⁹⁰

Apart from their latent potential, *tamizdat* publications were to some extent paradoxical, placing Western publishers in the difficult situation of being partly responsible for the persecution and sentencing of authors in the East. This distressing situation created a dilemma whereby Soviet writers felt they only received a hearing in the West, while the support of their Western counterparts did them harm. “They give them moral support, but endanger their lives,” Scammell observed.¹⁹¹

On November 11, 1965, the Secretary General of the International Association of Writers (PEN), David Carver, sent a telegram of protest from London to Alexei Surkov of the Soviet Writers’ Union: “A writer has the right to try to make his work known to the reading public. It

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Scammell, “Introduction,” 12.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

is not a crime under Soviet law to send manuscripts abroad.”¹⁹² Carver reminded Surkov of the legally ungrounded prohibition preventing a writer from publishing abroad, even in the Soviet Union. During the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial, it became clear that most of the accusations represented a violation of what had become known as ‘socialist legality.’ In the context of political developments in the Soviet Union, especially the destalinization drive from 1956, it became necessary for Soviet authorities to provide show trials to intimidate non-conformist writers. When discussing the authors’ arrests, Carver referred to the historical custom of Russian writers publishing abroad. Even Pasternak, he argued, was not arrested for sending *Doctor Zhivago* to Italy.¹⁹³

Despite the risks of publishing in the West, more and more books reached Western publishers in the years following the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial. The intimidation had the opposite effect: it aroused and mobilized public opinion and defined the issues at stake, bringing them out into the open. The editor of *Problems of Communism*, Abraham Brumberg, even went so far as to argue that the trial had “helped to change the very nature of public dissent.”¹⁹⁴ Until this point, the main concern of dissonant writers including Pasternak had been artistic freedom, but the brutal treatment of Sinyavsky and Daniel made it clear that “intellectual freedom without political freedom was unthinkable.”¹⁹⁵ The term ‘freedom’ gained a far broader significance and changed the attitude of intellectuals from defending artistic liberties to acting as spokesmen for fundamental political freedoms. An expression of this change was the manifold protest letters sent to the party leadership that viewed the trial as a violation of writers’ rights. The joint discontent over Sinyavsky’s and Daniel’s treatment united various groups of intellectuals and writers. From then on, appeals were no longer solely formulated by writers, but also by activists from many other areas of public life, such as physicists and mathematicians.¹⁹⁶ In the years following the Daniel-Sinyavsky trial in 1966, dissonance became dissidence, gaining a far more militant tone that symbolized the shift to a more political approach to literature.

¹⁹² Cited in Labeledz, “Writers in Prison,” 65.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 66.

¹⁹⁴ Brumberg, “Preface: In Quest of Justice,” 1.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 3.

SOLZHENITSYN'S MANUSCRIPTS GO WEST

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's work was second only to Pasternak's in the way it influenced Western discourse. Solzhenitsyn aligned himself with the precedents of *tamizdat* publications, wondering in his autobiography, *The Oak and the Calf*, about the risks he took when sending his works abroad: "After the howls of rage over Pasternak, after the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel, should I not have been cowering and screwing up my eyes in anticipation of a blow twice as hard to punish me for this insolent double?"¹⁹⁷ Although aware of the risks, it seems that Pasternak's courage was an inspiration. In 1958, Solzhenitsyn recalled his feelings: "[a]nd how I envied Pasternak! To him had fallen the destiny that I had dreamed up for myself!" Namely, that he would "publish so boldly the secret remnant of his work."¹⁹⁸ The subtitle of Solzhenitsyn's biography, *Not Another Pasternak*, reflects the historical continuity of *tamizdat* under Soviet rule.¹⁹⁹ Although Solzhenitsyn rejected Western culture as a literary figure and was strongly rooted in his own country, almost all of his books appeared in Western publishing houses before they were officially published in the Soviet Union.

Solzhenitsyn's decision to publish abroad has a long history. During the years he spent in various labor camps following World War II, he constructed an imagined archive of books he one day hoped to write. While serving in the Red Army in 1945, Solzhenitsyn was arrested because of derogatory comments he made about Joseph Stalin in private letters. He was charged with anti-Soviet propaganda and sentenced to eight years of hard labor. As he was transferred several times to different labor camps, he acquired a first-hand insight into the camp system and the functioning of the Gulag, its administrative agency. After he was released in 1953, he still spent three years in Russian internal exile in Kazakhstan. The moment he was released from the camp, Solzhenitsyn sat down to record his memories. For a long time he was content to remain underground rather than search out a readership. During all those years of secretive writing, which continued until 1961, he was convinced he would never see "a single line of his [...] in print" during his lifetime, and he "scarcely dared to allow" his close friends to read anything lest it become known.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf*, 220.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

¹⁹⁹ This is the title of Chapter 28 in Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn*, 496–515.

²⁰⁰ "Biography of Alexander Solzhenitsyn," 33.

Solzhenitsyn nevertheless admitted to the difficulties of remaining unread: "The underground writer's enormous advantage is freedom to write as he likes: he needs to keep neither censors nor editors in his mind's eye, nothing confronts him except his material, nothing hovers anxiously over him except the truth." The "inevitable drawback," of course, was "the lack of readers, and above all exacting readers of refined literary sensitivity."²⁰¹ During the following years, he tried to seek the publication of his books, first inside and then outside the Soviet sphere. In 1962 he succeeded in getting his novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* officially published in the Soviet official literary journal *Novy Mir*, which led to harsh accusations by the Soviet newspaper *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, turning Solzhenitsyn into an enemy of the people. It also led to his expulsion from the Soviet Writers' Union in 1969. None of his later books could be published officially in the USSR, which made Solzhenitsyn openly formulate his regret that his own people were not able to read his books: "[b]ut here in my homeland? Who would ever read it all, and when? Who would ever understand that for the sake of my books it was better this way?"²⁰² He still tried to publish his next novel, *The First Circle*, officially in the USSR.

When Solzhenitsyn realized the gates to official publication inside the Soviet Union were closed, he approached Olga Carlisle, a journalist who specialized in writing about Soviet literature, Solzhenitsyn's translator, and a Russian émigré who lived in San Francisco, to secure a possible publication in the West.²⁰³ He also left all four copies of *The First Circle* with his friends as he no longer trusted the offices of his former publisher *Novy Mir* in Moscow. When, on September 11, 1967, Solzhenitsyn found out that the flats of his friends had been raided and that the KGB had taken all copies of the book, he felt the increasing danger of the situation. The news reached him at the same time as that of Sinyavsky's arrest for smuggling stories to the West. Solzhenitsyn recalled his first reaction: "What had I done? Instead of listening to Tvardovsky, I had taken the novel away. I myself was its destroyer. Then I was told about Sinyavsky's arrest. Didn't my novel give them just as

²⁰¹ Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf*, 11.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 304.

²⁰³ The microfilms of *The First Circle* were smuggled out of the Soviet Union through a friend of Solzhenitsyn's years before 1967. Carlisle, *Solzhenitsyn and the Secret Circle*, 23.

good reason for arresting me?”²⁰⁴ Scammell described Solzhenitsyn’s state of mind as “petrified by this news.” All “the colour” had “drained from his face, leaving it an ashen grey” and turning Solzhenitsyn “momentarily speechless.”²⁰⁵

Despite his initial doubts, Zhores Medvedev recalls that Solzhenitsyn was convinced it would be unlikely that Soviet officials would resort to the same repressive methods they had used with Sinyavsky and Daniel:

When we expressed our fear that the Western appearance of *Cancer Ward* and *The First Circle* could lead to legal repressions, Solzhenitsyn expressed his conviction: “No, such a development I consider very unlikely. They have already exploited this method in the cases of Sinyavsky, Daniel and others. That won’t be repeated. They have to come up with a new strategy.”²⁰⁶

After the KGB seized his manuscripts, Solzhenitsyn met with Carlisle in Moscow. In her memoir, *Solzhenitsyn and the Secret Circle*, she recalls their first meeting, after which she agreed to publish *The First Circle* in the West:

We walked down a street that was completely deserted. I was very cold. I could feel Solzhenitsyn’s rage in his tightening hold on my arm. Our steps echoed down that dark, empty Moscow street. Then he spoke, and what he said left me limp, even as his own movements became more charged with energy. Alexander Solzhenitsyn was asking me to take charge of the publication in the West of the novel the KGB had “arrested.” It was called *The First Circle*.²⁰⁷

Solzhenitsyn asked her to arrange for the translation and the publication of the novel in such a way as to draw as much attention to the book as possible. “Let it stun public opinion throughout the world,” he

²⁰⁴ Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf*, 105.

²⁰⁵ Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn*, 526.

²⁰⁶ Medwejew, *Zehn Jahre im Leben des Alexander Solschenitzyn*, 105. Translation from German by the author.

²⁰⁷ Carlisle, *Solzhenitsyn and the Secret Circle*, 3.

said. "Let the true nature of these scoundrels be known."²⁰⁸ Similar to Zamoyska, who had seen to the publication of Sinyavsky's and Daniel's work, Carlisle decided not to go for an obviously anti-Soviet publisher. She wanted to make Solzhenitsyn's work known as a crucial part of world literature rather than just as another example of 'silenced Russia.' "Believing that it would be Solzhenitsyn's wish," she says, "we chose the more hazardous path, the one we believed would lead to greater rewards: we would see *The First Circle* published, not furtively as another muffled outcry from the USSR, but as the masterpiece of world literature it is."²⁰⁹ Aware of the risks of publishing his books with an American publishing house, Carlisle stresses the necessity of secrecy in order to guarantee Solzhenitsyn's security inside the Soviet Union:

I knew that the course we were taking made sense—but only Western sense. From the Soviet viewpoint we were deliberately and unlawfully committing a manuscript written by a member of the Writers Union to the mainstream of capitalism. [...] The case against him in Russia, were the secret to leak, would be devastating. But if the secret were kept, our strategy would be likely to strengthen his position in Russia once publication took place. Everything depended on secrecy.²¹⁰

Although Carlisle realized how important it would be to smuggle the manuscript out, she never actually became the Western contact to see for the publication of Solzhenitsyn's work. Solzhenitsyn accused her of caring only about the financial benefit of the book's publication, which made him decide to withdraw his manuscript from her. He then turned to other contacts that helped him smuggle his writings out of the Soviet Union and publish in the West.²¹¹

He dedicated his second autobiographical work, *Invisible Allies*, to all his unseen literary supporters (typists, photographers, printers, smugglers, translators, literary figures, and publishers) inside and outside the Soviet Union. In it, Solzhenitsyn explains that knowing his writings were secure in the West was "an insurance policy" for the "whole clandestine

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 17.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 31.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 52.

²¹¹ These problems are explored at length in their respective biographies.

operation.”²¹² As Solzhenitsyn feared the confiscation of his works in the USSR, which could mean their definite loss, he sent his works “out to safety,”²¹³ establishing various “safety-deposits.”²¹⁴ Besides making multiple copies of his works, Solzhenitsyn also photographed his manuscripts, which were set on microfilm and smuggled abroad. This photographic method facilitated the transfer of works to the West and often served as the basis for foreign translations.²¹⁵

A document dating to April 18, 1968, gives the impression that Solzhenitsyn neither sent abroad his novel *Cancer Ward*, which appeared in the West in 1968, nor permitted its publication in the Russian émigré journal *Grani*. Aleksandr Tvardovsky, the editor-in-chief of *Novy Mir*,²¹⁶ had long promised Solzhenitsyn the official publication of *Cancer Ward* in the Soviet Union. However, he was shocked to hear that *Grani* had received a copy of the book through the Soviet journalist Victor Louis, supposedly sent to him by the Committee for State Security to block its publication in *Novy Mir*. Following this news, *Novy Mir* pressured Solzhenitsyn to publish an official reaction, confirming the unofficial character of his book’s circulation in the West. Fearing officials would fabricate a case against him, Solzhenitsyn wrote various official statements soon afterwards. His letter to the Secretary of the Writers’ Union and various newspapers referred to a telegram sent by the editors of *Grani* to *Novy Mir*, announcing that they would publish Solzhenitsyn’s book in order to stop the the Committee of State Security’s supposedly ongoing efforts to block its official publication by sending various copies abroad.

Instead of discussing whether officials had indeed sent copies of his book abroad, Solzhenitsyn’s letter reveals the pressure he felt to pretend to be shocked at seeing his book printed in the West. Besides trying to save himself, these statements may have served his hope that it would still be possible to publish his books at home. Talking of the “terrible and dark avenues by which the manuscripts of Soviet writers can reach the West,” Solzhenitsyn recognized that literature should not be produced in a country in which “literary works become a profitable commodity for any scoundrel who happens to have a travel visa.” He further empha-

²¹² Solzhenitsyn, *Invisible Allies*, 209.

²¹³ Solzhenitsyn describes this fear in his autobiography, *The Oak and the Calf*, 291.

²¹⁴ Solzhenitsyn, *Invisible Allies*, 211.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 210–11.

²¹⁶ For more on this see Glenny, *Solzhenitsyn, Tvardovsky and Novy Mir*.

sized the wickedness of the Western publishing market in demanding that Russian writers “be printed in their own country” and not become “the plunder of foreign publishing houses.”²¹⁷ Solzhenitsyn even went so far as to compose a letter to the Italian newspaper *L’Unità* (1968) stressing the fact that he had never sent any copies abroad: “I declare that no foreign publisher has received a manuscript of this novel from me, nor any authorization to publish it. Therefore I do not recognize as legal any publication of this novel, present or future, done without my authorization.”²¹⁸

Although in his autobiography Solzhenitsyn argues that he never gave his books explicitly to a Western publisher before 1968, Scammell recalls that the Slovak reporter Pavel Licko smuggled *Cancer Ward* to Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring and guaranteed Solzhenitsyn a secure publication in the West.²¹⁹ Scammell asks: “How are we to explain this confident denial? Forgetfulness? Disingenuousness? Deliberate mystification?”²²⁰ What is clear is that Solzhenitsyn did not prevent the circulation of *Cancer Ward* in the *samizdat* sphere, and copies reached the West in manifold ways. Although Solzhenitsyn kept his distance from *samizdat* publication, still perceiving himself to be a respectable member of the establishment, from 1964 onwards *samizdat* editions of his books and stories appeared. After underground circulation, they reached the West through illegal channels and appeared in Russia in such émigré literary journals as *Grani*.²²¹

Solzhenitsyn remembers a meeting with Alexander Tvardosky in 1967, during which he was asked about the way *Cancer Ward* had reached the West. He explains that “I gave it to a few writers to get their opinion. Then I showed it to a number of publishing houses, and in general to anybody who asked. Why shouldn’t I show my own works to my fellow countrymen?”²²² The implied subtext is that circulation in the non-official sphere allowed the book to reach Western publishers. Solzhenitsyn had already warned Tvardovsky and other possible publishers “of the danger of my works finding their way abroad, since they have had a wide hand-to-hand circulation for a long time past. A year has passed and the

²¹⁷ “Solzhenitsyn to Writers and Newspapers,” in Labedz, *Solzhenitsyn*, 121.

²¹⁸ “Author Denies Authorization. Solzhenitsyn to *L’Unità*,” in *ibid*.

²¹⁹ Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn*, 626.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 627.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 507.

²²² Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf*, 173.

inevitable has happened.”²²³ On Palm Sunday, 1968, Solzhenitsyn heard via the BBC that long passages from *Cancer Ward* had been published in the *Times Literary Supplement*. He was filled with joy: “I had expected it—and I hadn’t. However anxious you are for them to happen, such events always burst upon you before you expect them.”²²⁴ Although he argued that he had never tried to pass this book to the West and had even refused to allow its publication abroad, he was happily surprised to learn about its appearance in the West: “If it had found its own way there—that was how it should be.”²²⁵ Nevertheless, only a year after the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial, Solzhenitsyn feared the consequences.

As soon as he realized that he could not count on the Soviet Writers’ Union to protect his rights or to help him publish the book inside the Soviet Union, Solzhenitsyn authorized the Swiss lawyer Fritz Heeb to act as his attorney. Heeb was to manage Solzhenitsyn’s books in the West—the sole opportunity to see his works published after he was expelled from the Writers’ Union in 1969 for anti-Soviet propaganda. In an article on November 12, 1969, in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, his expulsion was justified in the following way: “The name and works of A. Solzhenitsyn have in recent years been actively used by hostile bourgeois propaganda for a campaign of slander against our country.”²²⁶ That his works were published by Possev or YMCA in Paris meant that Soviet officials viewed Solzhenitsyn with the utmost suspicion. As Scammell points out: “In the eyes of the authorities, the interest of an openly anti-Soviet journal in the work of any Soviet author was proof that that author was at best politically unreliable, and at worst actively collaborating with the Soviet Union’s enemies.”²²⁷

The tension between Solzhenitsyn and the official Soviet literary establishment, occasioned by the publication of Solzhenitsyn’s work in émigré journals, reached a peak when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1970. Remembering the severity of the attacks on Pasternak after his Noble Prize for Literature put Solzhenitsyn in a state of vigilance. The award was proof that Solzhenitsyn had clandestinely smuggled his works out of the Soviet Union and violated the Union’s rules, as the award was dependent on the

²²³ Ibid., 205.

²²⁴ Ibid., 204.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ “Solzhenitsyn’s Expulsion from the Writers’ Union,” in Labedz, *Solzhenitsyn*, 159.

²²⁷ Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn*, 524.

successful transfer and reception of his manuscripts in the West. It was not his underground Russian writings, but rather his translated works read as world literature that made Solzhenitsyn famous. As Karl Ragnar Gierow formulated in his introductory speech, it was the traveling of Solzhenitsyn's books that proved crucial in creating a new image of Russian literature in the West: "Solzhenitsyn himself has said that he cannot contemplate living anywhere but in his native land. His books can; they are already living all round the world, now, perhaps, more than ever before."²²⁸

While Solzhenitsyn followed the same path to the Nobel Prize as Pasternak in the 1950s, Solzhenitsyn did not allow himself to become intimidated by the Soviet state. He condemned Pasternak for having withdrawn everything he had said at the moment he was threatened with forced exile. It was then that Solzhenitsyn became convinced he would act differently should he be awarded the prize, insisting that he would "resolutely accept the prize, resolutely go to Stockholm, make a very resolute speech."²²⁹ But when faced with exile himself, Solzhenitsyn decided on another solution. He sent his recorded Nobel Lecture to Sweden, so he would not have to leave the Soviet Union.²³⁰

A message about special circumstances seldom travels far and the words that fly round the world are those which appeal to, and help us, all. [...] They speak to us of matters that we need to hear more than ever before, of the individual's indestructible dignity. Wherever that dignity is violated, whatever the reason or the means, his message is not only an accusation but also an assurance: those, who commit such a violation, are the only ones to be degraded by it. The truth of this is plain to see wherever one travels.²³¹

From the perspective of the Western audience, the Nobel Prize marked not only the recognition of Solzhenitsyn's literary talent, but also his courage in the face of hardship and oppression. While Solzhenitsyn escaped exile at this time, it was not long before he would lose his official reputation.

The clash with the Soviet Writers' Union occurred in 1973, the year when *The Gulag Archipelago* was published. Hoping to see his

²²⁸ Gierow, "Presentation Speech."

²²⁹ Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf*, 292.

²³⁰ Ibid., 354.

²³¹ Gierow, "Presentation Speech."

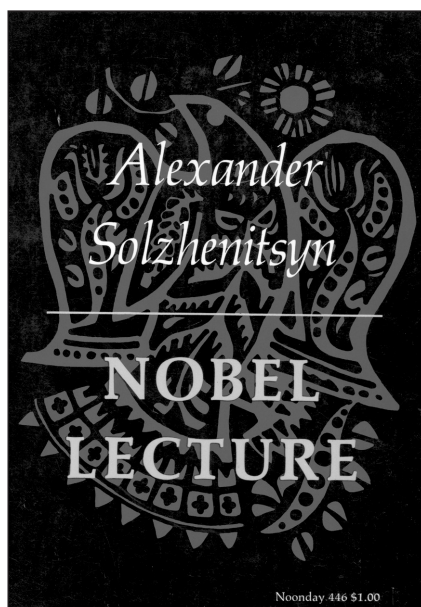


Figure 2: Cover of the English version of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture*. Translated from Russian by F. D. Reeve. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1972. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

book appear first in the Soviet Union, he kept various parts of the manuscript in friends' flats. But when the KGB discovered these, Solzhenitsyn ordered the immediate release of his book in the West. His Swedish courier, Stig Frederikson, remembers the moment Solzhenitsyn found out the KGB had confiscated his manuscript: "He gave me a letter with an order to speed up the translations and have the

first volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* published in several countries in the West as soon as possible, in Paris, and also in Russian."²³² The book appeared in late 1973, published by YMCA Press in Paris.²³³

Through Nikita Struve at the press, Solzhenitsyn established strong ties to the Russian émigré community in Paris. He also asked his publisher to send him various books that might get through to the Soviet Union. YMCA served as a reliable channel to the West, and this increasingly convinced Solzhenitsyn of the irreplaceability of publishing

²³² Fredrikson, "How I Helped Alexandr Solzhenitsyn Smuggle His Nobel Lecture from the USSR."

²³³ YMCA Press was founded in 1921 by Russian émigrés and was originally located in Prague. It calls itself one of the oldest and most important Russian-language publishing houses abroad. After the office moved to the Latin Quarter in Paris in 1961, the publishing house started to not only publish émigré writers, but also writings from inside the Soviet Union, which could not appear officially. In addition, it broadened its scope from religious works to include more literary works. Before and after his expulsion, Solzhenitsyn published several of his works through YMCA in Russian. See Hilton, "Russian and Soviet Studies in France," 68–69. France, with its strong Russian émigré community, became a center of literary culture that did not find its place in public debates inside the Soviet Union.

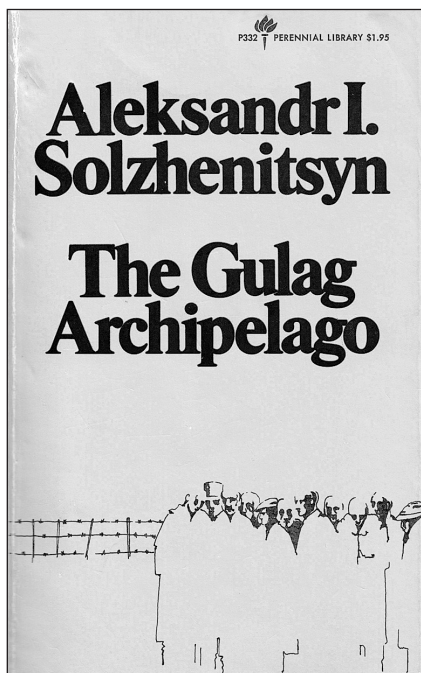


Figure 3: Cover of first *tamizdat* version of Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn, *Arkhipelag Gulag, 1918–1956: Opyt knudozhestvennogo issledovaniia* (3 volumes). Paris: YMCA, 1974. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

in Western intellectual circles. The book was written between 1958 and 1968 and was subsequently smuggled to France. It caused a sensation

abroad.²³⁴ Other publishing houses published the book in the same year.²³⁵ Although it was not officially published in the Soviet Union until 1989, *The Gulag Archipelago* circulated as *samizdat* among groups of non-conformist writers and activists. A year after it appeared in the West, the KGB forced Solzhenitsyn to emigrate. On February 13, 1974, Solzhenitsyn flew to Germany. The same day a group of Russian intellectuals drafted the famous *Moscow Appeal*, demanding Solzhenitsyn's return and an investigation of the crimes described in *The Gulag Archipelago*.²³⁶ They demanded that officials make the book available in the Soviet Union. The wide circulation of this appeal initiated a strong reaction from the Western public.

After the Western outcry against the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial in 1966, Solzhenitsyn's account of life in the GULag was the next event to create widespread debate

²³⁴ Solzhenitsyn, *Invisible Allies*, 235.

²³⁵ *The Gulag Archipelago* was published by YMCA (1973–75) in Russian in Paris, by Harper and Row (1974–78) in English translation in New York, by Possev in Frankfurt, by Harper Collins (1974) in New York, and by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in Paris. Since 1970, versions have appeared in the Polish journal *Kultura* in Paris.

²³⁶ The group consisted of Andrei Sakharov, Elena Bonner, Vladimir Maksimov, Mikhail Agurski, Boris Shragin, Pavel Litvinov, Yuri Orlov, the priest Sergei Zheludkov, Alexander Marchenko, and Larisa Bogoraz.

when it appeared in the West, as the book revealed that the system of prison camps was not limited to the times of Stalin but continued afterwards. After having been informed about the way the Soviet Union dealt with its non-conformist writers, the revelation of the still-existent GULag system fostered an explosive public reaction among intellectuals. When the book first appeared in France, where the publishing culture was highly sympathetic to left-wing ideology, Solzhenitsyn's detailed account of the crimes of the Soviet regime created a shock wave amongst the French intellectual elite. Especially after the student revolts and the Prague invasion of 1968, political and philosophical groups emerged in France that were sympathetic to underground developments in the 'Other Europe.' *The Gulag Archipelago* evoked a broad debate about the possible transfer of knowledge about the experiences under the Soviet regime to Western societies.

In particular, it had a first severe impact on the French left and its various *gauchistes* groups. As André Glucksmann announces in his anti-Marxist book *La cuisinière et le mangeur d'hommes* (*The Cook and the Man-Eater*), reading Solzhenitsyn was a form of self-knowledge for Western intellectuals.²³⁷ It introduced a new radical criticism of the Soviet Union, including a re-evaluation of the Russian Revolution for Western-type communism. Discussions of Solzhenitsyn's work centered on the term "totalitarianism," which gained new value through its employment by a "gauche anti-totalitaire" [anti-totalitarian left].²³⁸ The publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* left many Western left-wing intellectuals in an ideological vacuum.²³⁹ The book contributed to a schism between the Western intellectual left—especially in France and Italy—and the Soviet Union's official culture.²⁴⁰ The publication of Solzhenitsyn's books confronted the Western left with the moral dilemma of their Marxist prac-

²³⁷ Cited in Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, 147. Glucksmann, *La cuisinière et le mangeur d'hommes*.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁴⁰ Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left* and "An Antitotalitarian History of the French Revolution"; Judt, *Past Imperfect* and *The Burden of Responsibilities*; Caute, *Communism and the French Intellectual*; Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*; Hamon and Rotman, *La deuxième gauche*; Rosanvallon and Viveret, *Pour une nouvelle culture politique*.

tice, and created a new openness towards critical thought about the Soviet system.²⁴¹

French intellectuals such as François Furet, Raymond Aron, André Glucksmann, Cornelius Castoriadis, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Herbert Marcuse and Norbert Elias played a crucial role in shaping the new direction of the French left after their disillusionment with Soviet-style state socialism.²⁴² A good example of the disillusionment of the French left is Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre distanced himself from Soviet-style socialism after having read the personal accounts of ten Czech underground activists following the 1968 invasion of Prague. In his essay, “Le socialisme qui venait du froid” (“The Socialism that Came in From the Cold”), he remembers their impact on his growing disbelief in the reformational capacity of the Soviet Union: “But there are these voices, these voices of Czechs and Slovaks, cut down while taking a breath [...] voices that one could ridicule but not deny.”²⁴³ He speculates about the impossibility of further supporting the Soviet regime “after August 1968,” when one had to “give up the moral standpoint and the reformist illusion.”²⁴⁴ Instead, the left should listen “to those voices,” collect “documents which reconstruct the events,” and “start with an in-depth analysis” of the structures of Soviet society.²⁴⁵ This behavior helped engage the Western left with a question about socialism’s future that would not resemble existing Soviet systems. Only a shift from an unquestioned support of Soviet-style socialism to a re-evaluation of socialism in general would open the road to a necessary understanding of political alternatives to capitalism. According to Arrato, France’s centralized state provided *la gauche anti-totalitaire* with enough reason to look towards the Eastern parts of Europe for new models of civic engagement.²⁴⁶ The non-governmental societal engagement—as represented in the *tamizdat* writings from the ‘Other Europe’—was a source of moral and political inspiration to many Western left-wing intellectuals.

²⁴¹ Kramer, “The Flowers on Sartre’s Grave,” 357. See also Judt, *Past Imperfect* and Grémion, “Les Intellectuels français et le choc du Goulag.”

²⁴² Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*; Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*; Glucksmann, *La cuisinière et le mangeur d’hommes*; Castoriadis, *Le contenu du socialisme*; Lévy, *Barbarism with a Human Face*; Marcuse, *One-Dimension Man*; Elias, *Involvement and Detachment*.

²⁴³ Sartre, “Der Sozialismus, der aus der Kälte kam,” 1. Translation from German by the author.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ See Arrato and Cohen, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 36–42.

As Sartre argues, “listening to those voices” prompts Western readers to revise their ideas about Soviet-style socialism. These uncensored writings challenged the West to formulate a non-conformist political culture that depended on far greater individual commitment and active engagement in writing, circulating, and publishing literature despite ongoing repressions by the state.

Among the non-conformist writings reaching the West, Andrei Sinyavsky noted, the appearance of Solzhenitsyn’s epic work played a significant role in raising new Western attentiveness to developments in the non-official spheres of the ‘Other Europe’:

Gulag is unique, if only because of its prodigious scope. Solzhenitsyn succeeded magnificently in synthesizing a collective experience and giving it a voice. But let us not forget that most of the pressures aimed at trying to improve things behind the Iron Curtain come from the very same liberal Western intelligentsia that Solzhenitsyn so misjudges when he says: “...there is the American intellectuals” great sympathy for socialism and communism. They almost all live and breathe it.’²⁴⁷

The impact of *The Gulag Archipelago* on the intellectual elite needs to be understood against the background of the ‘Third Wave’ of Russian emigration to the West that started in the years following Daniel’s and Sinyavsky’s trial. It consisted of well-known Soviet writers who were arrested and, in one way or another, expelled from the Soviet Union. As Sinyavsky points out, it was crucial for the emergence of a Western audience sensitive to *tamizdat* literature that “the *Gulag* did not arrive alone in the West. People came also, thousands of them, who [were] living witnesses of the Gulag.”²⁴⁸ Shaped by their experiences with the daily realities of state socialism, non-conformist writers and thinkers from the ‘Other Europe’ thoroughly contributed to the ideological break of French intellectuals with Soviet-type communism. Sunil Khilnani argues that émigrés played a political role in so far as they transferred private knowledge about the suffering and suppression of underground writers in the Soviet sphere to the West:

²⁴⁷ Sinyavsky and Carlisle, “Solzhenitsyn and Russian Nationalism.”

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

The influx of intellectual dissidents from Eastern Europe [...] placed at the centre of French intellectual life the question of human rights and democratic freedom. In some sense the discovery of, and sudden interest in, these questions equaled in its abstraction the anti-statist posturing of the New Philosophers.²⁴⁹

Eurocommunism, a special form of European communism, rose and united various communist groups in the West that were trying to renew communism's outlook. However, Eurocommunist parties differed from each other in terms of their evolution away from the support of the Soviet Union and towards the governance of democratic societies. As the prospect of war became less likely in the years following the détente, Western communists felt less compelled to follow the Soviet example. *Samizdat* and *tamizdat* contributed to the challenge Eurocommunism posed to the Soviet Union. Expressing concern about the treatment of uncensored writers was common among the various Western communist groups that demonstrated their belief in the advocacy of civil and political rights.²⁵⁰ The impossibility of accepting the treatment of non-conformist authors confronted the Western left with questions about the possibility of an alternate model to Soviet communism. In 1980 Leonard Shapiro became convinced that democratic dissenters in the Soviet Union could become a matter of direct interest to the West. Instead of making a case for the West "to support their struggle on humanitarian or sentimental grounds," he believed that Western support was justified "as a matter of self-interest."²⁵¹ The weakening of the "chorus of unanimous support" for the Soviet Union resulted in the ideological demarcation of Western communist parties from Soviet-style communism. After literary opposition inside the USSR and the exiles revealed the situation in the Soviet Union, the Eurocommunist movements finally dared to voice their criticism and "proclaim their independence."²⁵²

Shapiro called for an intensification of Western support of subversive activities inside the Soviet Union "to ensure that dissent in the USSR is not silenced."²⁵³ In a similar vein, Vladimir Kusin argued in 1979

²⁴⁹ Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, 152.

²⁵⁰ Compare Pasquino, "Eurocommunism," 88.

²⁵¹ Schapiro, "Soviet Heroes."

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

that “an awareness of kinship and even identity between Czechoslovak reformism and Eurocommunism” should be established.²⁵⁴ Besides sparking acute political debate among Western communist groups, Solzhenitsyn’s book fostered reflection on the Western reader’s own role in society. The former American ambassador to the Soviet Union, George Kennan, contemplated the private intellectual quandary the book evoked: “And what of us—of us Westerners, enjoying rights we scarcely value, wallowing in our mechanical luxuries, and grumbling about the lines at the filling station? What does this book mean for us?”²⁵⁵ Unorthodox books such as *The Gulag Archipelago* introduced new discourses about non-governmental society into Western societies. The courage of writers challenged the West to undertake non-governmental action that depended on a far greater commitment to civil society by the individual than was practiced in Western societies. Examples of this independent engagement in the ‘Other Europe’ reached the West through *tamizdat* and contributed to the critical questioning of the Western commitment to civic culture. The most valuable contribution Western readers could make to Solzhenitsyn’s book was, as George Kennan stated, by recognizing its “relevance to themselves, their problems and their behavior.” He warned the Western readership not to take it “in a spirit of detached and smug superiority, pitying the poor Russians for the deficiencies of their system of government” and simultaneously “congratulating themselves on the beauties of Western civilization.” If they went down that road, they would miss the work’s “supreme value,” which lay “in its exemplary quality—its quality as an example of ruthless and fearless honesty in the exploration of the weaknesses in one’s own personal behavior and in one’s own society.” Kennan was convinced that the Western reader was in urgent need of the book’s revelation of the honesty of one’s conscience. But if the West remained “deaf to its message” again, it would also weaken the work’s striking effect in Russia.²⁵⁶ Beyond the book’s immediate effect on the individual reader, Kennan believed, world opinion could impact Soviet politics. Through the power of public opinion and knowledge about the course of events in Russia, the West could further the causes detailed in *The Gulag Archipelago*.

²⁵⁴ Kusin, “Challenge to Normalcy,” 28.

²⁵⁵ Kennan, “Between Earth and Hell.”

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

Throughout Europe the publication of this book engaged both anti-totalitarian and new leftist groups in their support of non-conformist writers inside the Soviet sphere. The book's political message was employed for different political purposes and led to an increasing interest of the Western media to report about developments inside the 'Other Europe.' Media interest in *tamizdat* literature created a potential conflict as to the question of which media owned the monopoly on Western reporting about Eastern European spaces. This dispute between politically diversified media and their claims on the interpretation of developments behind the Iron Curtain was present during the 1950s, and it was to have an impact on future developments of this emerging cross-border literary culture.

CHAPTER 2

Tamizdat: A Transnational Community

STEPPING INTO THE UNDERGROUND

The emergence of *tamizdat* was closely linked to the relationship between the inception of non-conformism in general and literary non-conformism in particular.¹ What matters here is the nature of the regime from which non-conformism developed. Often, it surfaced from an individual's decisive experience with the state. As Andrei Sakharov has pointed out, it was the state, especially the censor, that indirectly invented the phenomenon of non-conformism. "Professional dissidents," Sakharov wrote in his *Memoirs*, "had not yet appeared on the scene. I don't use this term as a reproach: it was the authorities who, by firing some dissenters, driving others into emigration, and stripping ex-convicts of all their rights, gave birth to the phenomenon of the 'professional dissident.'"² Andrei Pleșu, a Romanian scholar, asked "how one could function normally in a rigorously abnormal environment like" a communist dictatorship, underlining the impossibility for intellectuals to live an honest intellectual life under

¹ Although favoring the term non-conformism, it needs to be acknowledged that Walter Parchomenko is right when he says that "the distinction drawn between the terms dissident and non-conformist frequently disappears as the conflict with the authorities intensifies and as nonconformists [...] gradually organize and petition [...] Western officials for assistance." See Parchomenko, *Soviet Images of Dissidents and Nonconformists*, 3.

² Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 361.

state socialism.³ The idea of independent intellectual activity stood in harsh contrast to the regime.

As the Czech writer Ivan Klíma recalled in an interview with Philip Roth in 1990: "The Power [...] was afraid of criticism. It also realized that any kind of spiritual life at all is directed in the end toward freedom. That's why," he said, "it did not hesitate to forbid practically all Czech culture, to make it impossible for writers to write, painters to exhibit, scientists—especially in the social sciences—to carry out independent research."⁴ Out of this fear of criticism and of any kind of autonomous intellectual thinking, state officials tried to suppress all forms of unofficial activity. Their propaganda aimed to maintain control over all printed materials, suggesting that state socialism fixated on literature. Its exclusive power, then, lay in deciding the nature and amount of information to be released. During a roundtable discussion in 2006, the Hungarian underground author Miklós Haraszti commented on the crucial role of literature for the maintenance of power in Communism's "bookish societies." Communism's "bookish ideology" intensified the "cult of literature" that enabled its ultimate aim of controlling "every aspect of communication."⁵ As the socialist regimes tried to monopolize literary life, including all publication channels—in particular circulation abroad—all activities related to the production of literature were supervised.

Censorship played a key role in the preservation of political and ideological control.⁶ The official press informed people about the "political, social, and economic views of particular citizens and officials, about the practices of the courts and even the secret police."⁷ However, this information was far from reliable since it passed through one of the world's most powerful censorship machines before reaching the reader and rarely criticized the system seriously.⁸ State supervision not only included the contents and distribution of books, but also the economics of its physical production, including paper distribution and printing equipment. Thus, access to technical instruments such as typewriters, printing and Xerox-machines, audio-visual equipment, as well raw mate-

³ Plešu, "Intellectual Life under Dictatorship," 61.

⁴ Roth, "Conversation in Prague with Ivan Klíma," 50.

⁵ Haraszti, "From Memories to Legacies."

⁶ Wedgwood, "Glasnost, Dialogue, and East-West Relations," 297.

⁷ Reddaway, "Introduction," 16.

⁸ See Ermolaev, *Censorship in Soviet Literature*.

rials like paper, ink, and various types of glue used for producing and multiplying literature were exceedingly restricted. These official censorship policies pushed the emerging independent literary activity into non-conformism. Such laws, however, did not prevent writers throughout the Eastern Bloc from sending their works abroad; instead, they often even served as an incentive.

Regardless of the censorship system, the state-controlled and state-produced press was of little interest to critical intellectuals. Vladimir Andrlé has pointed out that it was impossible to be an intellectual in Czechoslovakia if it meant “a taste for reflection [and] morally-committed engagement with public issues,” which undermined “orthodoxies” and achieving “truthfulness.”⁹ As independent literature was not allowed to exist under Soviet-type socialism, critical intellectuals were to a large extent morally and intellectually incompatible with the regime.¹⁰ Their claim to an independent and non-political culture necessarily resulted in a confrontation with the state’s addiction to exercising full control over culture and literature. Unable to maintain personal integrity and fully commit to their professional lives,¹¹ autonomous intellectuals seldom found their place under state socialism—unless it was in the sphere the state had only limited access to: the literary underground.

As a result of state repression, many writers withdrew their literary activities from the official sphere and used other forms of expression that were largely uncontrollable by the state. Memoirs and interviews with former non-conformist writers reveal that many found themselves acting in the underground because of their struggle to preserve their personal integrity.¹² In her autobiography, the Soviet writer Ludmilla Alexeyeva phrases her initially inoffensive stance toward the regime as follows: “I, too, was a private person. And I wasn’t eager to get into politics. But defending *samizdat* was not politics. We were defending our liberty to choose what we read, our way of life. If anything, it was self-defense.”¹³ Non-conformist authors often emphasized the individual, personal character of their decision to accept the regime’s restrictions on their creative activities no longer. Among the most extreme experiences were punishment, deprivation and economic distress. These experiences pre-

⁹ Andrlé, “Czech Dissidents,” 119.

¹⁰ Cited in Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent, and Reform in Soviet Russia*, 76.

¹¹ Andrlé, “Czech Dissidents,” 121.

¹² Long, “Reality Czech,” 141.

¹³ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 169.

vented critical writers from living an undisturbed (literary) life. Thus, the road into unofficial spheres seemed like the only, natural solution. Michael Long has observed that the “writers’ mini-conferences, the home seminars, the ‘illegal’ concerts, even the *samizdat* editions of literature, philosophy, and science” were all manifestations of attempting to “live a normal life, albeit outside of officially sanctioned venues and media.” Rather accidentally “[s]cores of individuals found themselves to be ‘dissident’.”¹⁴ Here, “accidentally” reflects the unintended and non-political motivation of non-conformist writers to enter the literary underground.

While other fields such as history or sociology could hardly escape the official paradigm, the government was not able to impose the same controls on literary spheres.¹⁵ They imposed censorship, banned books, and punished writers who circulated their work in the underground or published abroad, but officials could not prevent the writing process itself. As György Konrád points out: “Bans and permissions do not change the integrity, the autonomy of the work. They do not reflect its spirit, only new shifts in the wearisome struggle between the political leadership and society.”¹⁶ Konrád stresses the importance of the author’s autonomy and rejects the idea of dissent. He argues that the term “dissent,” with its political connotations, was simply not an appropriate adjective to describe “literature.”¹⁷ The Chartists, the signatories of the Czech *Charter 77*, were also repelled by the term, as it had been heavily misused by the government to describe those who were no longer loyal to the party. Tom Stoppard notes that the regime liked to “throw around the word ‘dissident’—with its connotations of enemy of the state,” which is why the term was entirely avoided by the Chartists, who pointed out that “nothing in the document” could be construed as “antistate or antisocialist.”¹⁸ However, Stoppard also points out that even to the Western reader it appeared difficult to differentiate between the groups and the ideological fragmentation of the *samizdat* movement. He observes that this was in part caused by a reliance on the Western media, including Voice of America and the BBC, which elided differences within the movement. But Stoppard refuses both biased approaches to non-con-

¹⁴ Long, “Reality Czech,” 141.

¹⁵ Shatz, *Soviet Dissent*, 141.

¹⁶ Konrád, “The Long Work of Liberty,” 7.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Stoppard, “Prague: The Story of the Chartists.”

formist literature. In his understanding, “to be an autonomous writer,” independent of any regime, should be the core endeavor of any real writer.¹⁹

In 1968 Václav Havel even went so far as to argue against the linguistic division of art into separate spheres: “It does not seem to me particularly meaningful to divide art between the official and anti-official on the one hand and the independent (that is, politically neutral) on the other.”²⁰ Havel categorized this division in three ways: art that was officially sanctioned and appropriately ideological; dissident art that was scarcely better than its official opposite; and “true, modern art,” which alone stood outside “politics and all ideologies.”²¹ Havel argued that if one took culture seriously, the only criterion for judging art was the “degree to which an artist is willing, for external reasons, to compromise the truth.”²² Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz, a Czech-Canadian professor who was in close contact with the *samizdat* movement, refused to distinguish between the literary quality of the books and their moral relevance. Even “if it’s a banal story,” she discerned the writers’ profound “moral commitment.” In her opinion, the literature that reached her from the underground always succeeded in merging its moral and literary commitment.²³

Solzhenitsyn, who started his career as an underground writer, understood art in a similar manner. “Before I was arrested,” he writes, “I knew very little about such things [censorship]. I drifted into literature unthinkingly, without really knowing what I needed from it, or what I could do for it. I just felt depressed because it was so difficult, I thought, to find fresh subjects for stories.”²⁴ Only through the state invasion of his private life and the censors’ claims to control his writings did Solzhenitsyn gain a clear picture of the writer’s duty under state socialism. “Without hesitation, without inner debate,” he recalls, “I entered into the inheritance of every modern Russian writer intent on the truth: I must write simply to ensure that it was not all forgotten, that posterity might someday come to know of it.”²⁵ Solzhenitsyn accepted the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Havel, “Six Asides About Culture,” 130–31.

²¹ Ibid., 129.

²² Ibid., 133.

²³ Cited in Velinger, “The Role of the Canadian Embassy in Prague.”

²⁴ Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf*, 2.

²⁵ Ibid., 3.

incongruity between his own understanding of literature and the state's use of it for ideological purposes, and concluded that he could no longer rely on the state's mercy to publish his books. He accepted the necessity of giving up his dream of being published ever again at home. In return, he hoped to preserve his literary independence and his freedom of thought. In this way, Solzhenitsyn was able to save his creativity and hence, his very personality, which could have been irreparably damaged, had he subjugated it to the censor.²⁶

Literary self-expression and the uncensored imagination gained political significance only in relation to the existing censorship and literary restrictions. In this manner, Michael Long rightly interprets the originally non-political stance of the Czech writer Věra Jirousová, who was "essentially uninterested in politics per se." It was "through the exercise of her intellectual and professional interests in art history and music" that she "found herself stymied by and isolated from official culture."²⁷ This, again, reveals the government's access to the individual's life, and its prohibition of any kind of intellectual activity outside official thinking. Officials tried to prevent reunions of intellectuals, such as the unofficial philosophical seminar held by Ivan Havel which started as a discussion amongst several philosophers about the dearth of occasions for intellectual discussion, rather than as a political program.²⁸

Although stressing the apolitical character of these meetings,²⁹ Havel recalled how he had to change jobs frequently and work as a freelance programmer, because the government sought to limit his contact with—and thus potential influence over—others.³⁰ These intellectual circles posed the danger of developing and spreading critical ideas that could harm the regime's official culture. However, the prevention of any kind of unofficial culture resulted in the emergence of major independent activity. In a wonderful analogy, Karel van het Reve, one of the key figures of literary transfers between the Soviet Union and Holland, illu-

²⁶ Shatz, "The Soviet Dissidents," 141.

²⁷ Long, "Reality Czech," 141.

²⁸ "Ivan Havel," cited in Long, *Making History*, 25.

²⁹ In his book *Conscience, Dissent, and Reform in Soviet Russia*, Philip Boobbyer presents the viewpoints of many dissidents who perceived their activities as a non-political, moral phenomenon. See the chapter entitled "The Ethics of the Human Rights Movement," in particular 76.

³⁰ "Ivan Havel," cited in Long, *Making History*, 24.

minates the way underground activity developed through the criminalization of all independent activity by the state and its officials:

The “underground” aspect of the activity of the dissidents is often misunderstood. In the Western world the word “underground” means only a certain affectation. In the Soviet Union it does not mean illegality. A considerable part of dissident activity takes place legally and openly. Only to make these activities possible, the dissidents have to do a number of things in an unobtrusive way. It is a kind of Robin Hood situation in certain respects: the Bad Prince challenges anybody to come and compete with him in, say, archery. All highways are watched day and night to intercept Robin Hood illegally, to arrest him on trumped-up charges (most of these Robin Hoods have never broken any law), to take him in for vagrancy, to provoke him into some fight, to assassinate him quietly—all this to prevent him from coming to the tournament, because once the trumpet has sounded the tournament is supposed to be, and to a certain extent is, a real tournament and one cannot arrest or assassinate Robin Hood in the presence of all these foreign ambassadors. [...] So the authorities try to keep Robin Hood away from the tournament, and Robin Hood tries to get there—both parties sometimes avoiding, sometimes starting a fight. Avoiding because Robin Hood wants to get to the tournament unwounded and unkill[ed] [sic] and unarrested, and the government does not want the public, the foreign ambassadors [...] to know about Robin Hood’s existence, because that might lead to a shift of interest and cause Western newspapers to switch from party congresses, the Moscow subway, and the Bolshoy ballet to Solzhenitsyn, the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, and the Crimean tatars.³¹

Because the hero wished to come to the arena but the state did everything to avoid it, a clash occurred. As a result, their activity moved into the underground. In other words, to become involved in literary dissent

³¹ Karel van het Reve, speech given at “London Panel Discussion on Samizdat and Dissent.” By Radio Liberty Committee. October 22–23, 1971. Box 14, Folder Samizdat 1971, Sheet 4. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

was a reaction to the official invasions of the personal life of writers, and their subsequent resistance to further follow state orders.³²

Through state interference, an individual's private life could turn into an "anti-Soviet biography."³³ State interference in personal lives often marked, as Sofia Tchouikina observes, a break in the writers' life history. It was punishment for their protests rather than their "social background, education, and ideas" that defined dissidents' biography in conflict with "an ordinary Soviet biography."³⁴ The end of one's professional career as a writer or university teacher often marked the beginning of dissenting activity in the literary sphere. As most underground writers were highly educated, and engaged in such creative work as writing, publishing, and teaching, the biographical break often took place in the form of a professional break. Tchouikina terms this kind of biographical moment a "career break" that ruptures a life story "when a single event changes both the form and the extent of a social career."³⁵ It often represented a turning point that fundamentally altered people's lives, dividing it into various stages: the "ordinary Soviet citizen," the "dissident and pariah," and "the 'ex-dissident'" or émigré. As the break from the first Soviet life marked the entrance into unofficial spheres, this schism offers an insight into the world of experience that gave the emerging *samizdat* movement its specific character. State interference, punishment, and stigmatization as political aliens demolished the first life, shifting their activities to the dissident milieu.³⁶

However, participation in the literary underground did not only emerge from an imposed career break. Instead, it was often also the result of a psychological process that involved overcoming certain mental barriers. Writers and activists had to become aware of the borders that

³² Apart from a few very interesting recent studies that deal with biographical material from Eastern Europe, the question as to the individual's biographical path both into the literary underground and into the cross-border activity of *tamizdat* has so far been neglected in historical research. Studies on the biographical element of underground activism include Humphrey, Miller, and Zdravomyslova, eds., *Biographical Research in Eastern Europe*; Long, *Making History*; Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia*, 132–49; and Breckner, Kalekin-Fishman, and Miethe, eds., *Biographies and the Division of Europe*.

³³ Tchouikina, "Anti-Soviet Biographies," 129.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

shackled their daily practices of writing, printing, and publishing. Hence, participation in literary dissent was also an individual's response to the various forms of discrimination under the regime. Awareness of such restrictions created an alternative that challenged the boundaries that excluded authors from membership in the official literary community. Political persecution led many intellectuals to veer from the state's logic and start "living in truth," as Havel formulated it.³⁷ A community of shared experiences emerged where underground writers, printers, typists, smugglers, and publishers united to create their own sphere of literary debate and public interaction.

These activities enabled people to not only cross internal borders, but also create new boundaries that prevented state interference in their personal lives. This shift from a person's passive private suffering to their active resistance gave way to various responses to the impact of authoritarian rule on an individual's life. In a 2004 interview, the Hungarian *samizdat* author Gáspár Miklós Tamás explains that his case was "a simple story," as he belonged to the Hungarian minority in Romania. As the subeditor of a literary weekly in Siebenbürgen, he had "enough trouble with the security organs." Explaining his life story meant reconstructing the processes whereby the security apparatus banned him, step by step, from his profession. This exclusion had to be "understood in German under *Berufsverbot* [sic]."³⁸ The German term *Berufsverbot* designates a 1933 law that prohibited many Jews, artists, and political opponents from engaging in certain professions. By aligning his professional exclusion by the Romanian security apparatus with Nazi Germany's *Berufsverbot*, and labeling both "simple stories," Tamás creates a continuity of suffering. As his family was Jewish, it is not unlikely that this continuity also took place within the history of his own family. By switching to German, Tamás stresses the singularity of the systematic persecution in Nazi Germany.

In an interview the same year, the Hungarian writer and philosopher Sándor Radnóti also refers to *Berufsverbot*. He recounts that "I was an editor in a publishing house. That was in 1979, the end of 1979, when I had to go. Then I worked for ten years without a job. How was it called at that time in Germany? Ah, *Berufsverbot*. Yes, that was a *Berufsverbot*."³⁹

³⁷ Havel and Vladislav, *Václav Havel or Living in Truth*, 1986.

³⁸ Tamás, interview by the author.

³⁹ Radnóti, interview by the author.

Radnóti, who belonged to an old Jewish family from Transylvania, also draws a direct link between the restrictions imposed on Jews during the Nazi regime and his own prohibition from working due to his literary activism. For Tamás, too, state interference meant job loss and unemployment, which lasted until the regime change. The first phase of his official life as a writer and teacher ended abruptly. The usual path of employment for a literary and academic figure was barred. The fact that the written word, in the form of a pamphlet—directed not against the Hungarian but the Polish regime—resulted in Tamás’s ban from his profession sheds light on the Soviet regime’s increased scrutiny of uncensored and non-official writings. Despite having experienced the direct impact of his literature on his career, Tamás consciously continued writing. He published several articles under a pseudonym, but he soon felt bored with that: “What is the point in publishing freely when you don’t show your face?” So he took the risk of publishing under his own name, although he knew he could be fired. Nevertheless, when he was actually dismissed, “it was unexpected.” He then became “extremely poor” and suffered desperate problems of how to feed himself. “It was not easy at all,” as he “hadn’t put any money aside.”⁴⁰ Like many intellectuals, Tamás’s unemployment forced him to accept jobs outside the intellectual sphere. These included physical jobs, such as that of the famous window cleaner Tomas in Milan Kundera’s *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

WOMEN STEP INTO THE UNDERGROUND

The risk of being fired from their jobs and being imprisoned was even more problematic for women. Lynne Haney contends that “Hungarian women” were “overwhelmingly absent from the battles of the 1950s and the hidden meetings in the 1970s and 1980s.”⁴¹ This phenomenon resulted from their very tight daily routines, which combined a full working day with their complete responsibility for the household and child care. “The kinds of risks they could take and the time they had in which to take them,” Haney observes, “were limited.”⁴² Women’s roles as

⁴⁰ Tamás, interview by the author.

⁴¹ Haney, “From Proud Worker to Good Mother,” 126.

⁴² Ibid.

mothers meant they were not as flexible as their husbands when it came to public demonstrations. In 1968, the Russian poet and human right activist Natalya Gorbanevskaya recalled the special risk she took when demonstrating with her child:

I had my three-months-old son with me and for this reason they did not seize me immediately. [...] I was beaten in a car. My baby also was taken to the police station, and I was not allowed to nurse him for more than six hours. [...] After the search I was released, apparently because I must care for my children.⁴³

During a series of almost daily interrogations over several weeks, Irina Yakir, a member of a 'famous' dissident family and a contributor to the Moscow *Chronicle of Current Events*, was permitted to return home every day, because she had given birth four months before.⁴⁴ Because of her young child, Yakir experienced better treatment than her male colleagues. But in tougher cases the authorities would not hesitate to institutionalize children while their mothers were imprisoned. This might be one of the reasons for the marginal representation of women in *samizdat* historiography. Most of the prominent literary figures appear to have been men. Women's voices were often subtly, but effectively, silenced. For instance, *An Hour Called Hope: Almanac of Czech Literature 1968–1978* presents the work of fifty-two male writers and only three female authors.⁴⁵

Beyond the special risk associated with their children, women were often overburdened with household work. In contrast to their husbands, who were "battling and plotting," Haney argues that "women went on their second shift in the home."⁴⁶ Their daily routines allowed for few possibilities to produce "traceable artifacts or written manifestos."⁴⁷ As socialist states had declared the 'woman question' resolved, feminism and feminist criticism was considered "redundant."⁴⁸ Soviet women might be "bulldozer drivers and ditch diggers, doctors and judges, and

⁴³ "Soviet Poet, in Letter Abroad, Deplores Invasion," 8.

⁴⁴ "Soviet Dissident Said to Confess," 14.

⁴⁵ Gruša, Uhde, and Vaculik, *Stunde Namens Hoffnung*. Translation of the title from German by the author.

⁴⁶ Haney, "From Proud Worker to Good Mother," 126.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Winter, "Less Equal than Others," 41.

occasionally even jet pilots and ship captains,” a Western reporter surmised in 1976, “but are they liberated?”⁴⁹ The answer, he felt, was no. Even though women joined the workforce, they were not granted an adequate, deserved social status. But this did not mean that they did not challenge gender roles in certain contexts. In her analysis of gender and dissent during communism, Maria Bucur also proposes shifting the perspective of women’s activism from their public political role towards more subtle forms of non-conformism in the private sphere, that is, at home and in the family.⁵⁰

Padraic Kenney similarly identifies the gendered nature of everyday life in socialism, in which women often underestimated their power. As the communist state “depended not only on its citizens living a lie (as Vaclav Havel observed)” but equally on them “accepting and inhabiting clearly delineated identities,” women “could wound it by reshaping identities in threatening ways.”⁵¹ By “playing on the roles assigned to them,”⁵² women were able to pursue new forms of activism derived from their private lived experience:

Women’s resistance in which concerns from the nominally private sphere were thrust forwards as points of conflicts with the state, showed indirectly just how large the private sphere was in the eyes of the communist state. The simple fact that such concerns were raised and went on to destabilize the state suggest that these were issues (motherhood, family budgets) the state preferred not to deal with unless forced to.⁵³

Women’s private role as mothers and household organizers became politically loaded when their complaints about food shortages and economic demands grew louder.

In the life stories of a number of prominent female figures a close connection between womens’ professional and private lives during socialism is apparent. The Czech sociologist Jiřina Šiklová lost her job due to her literary activities, and began working as a cleaning lady. In recalling these events, she ironically repeats the state’s logic: “It was

⁴⁹ Shipler, “Life for the Soviet Women,” 8.

⁵⁰ Bucur, “Gendering Dissent.”

⁵¹ Kenney, “The Gender of Resistance,” 425.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

normal that I must leave the Philosophy Department. I think that it was the consequence of my activity.”⁵⁴ Jiřina Hrábková, who also belonged to the Czech Charter movement, pointed to the special difficulties that women faced when being exposed to the discrimination by the state. “It was not only about the fact that one lost one’s existence and one’s job, which gave meaning to one’s life. We took that quite casually,” she declared, proving to themselves that they were “capable of doing any type of job.” It was the “destiny of our children” that taxed her the most—the knowledge that she “should have introduced them to life, but instead all gates were closed to them [sic].”⁵⁵ Šiklová also saw the barriers her children would face, using this knowledge as motivation to act, because she “wanted to be able to look my children in the face. If I had not acted as I had done, how could I now explain my inaction to them?” This was not a question of “heroism,” but rather “simply a matter of being able to live with myself and my family and to speak with other people without shame or blame.”⁵⁶ Here, the interference of the state into family life had developed to such a degree that Šiklová did not see any other means of upholding her self-respect than to engage in the literary underground.

In the case of East Germany, authors such as Christa Wolf tried to walk the line between adaption and resistance to the state. Wolf never did turn to straight non-conformism. Her work and attitude towards the East German state were “clearly loyal but steadily critical.”⁵⁷ In contrast to Šiklová, who felt that there was no way to live a normal life without stepping into the underground, Wolf sought to live a life of critical compromise. Later, when the files of the East German secret police were opened, it was revealed that she had briefly even served the secret police as an informant *inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*. Her professional and private attitude towards the system endowed her with the reputation of a “loyal dissident” and “opportunist,”⁵⁸ who not only failed to blow the whistle on a corrupt dictatorship, but enjoyed all the privileges doled out to a “state poet.”⁵⁹ Her novel, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (*The Quest for Christa T.*), which

⁵⁴ “Jiřina Šiklová,” in Long, *Czech Voices of Dissent*, 103.

⁵⁵ Hrábková, “In diesem Marasmus Möchte Niemand für Immer Leben,” 145. Translation from German by the author.

⁵⁶ Cited in Randle, *People Power*, 173.

⁵⁷ Webb, “Fair East Winds,” 13.

⁵⁸ Binder, “Christa Wolf Dies at 82.”

⁵⁹ “Christa Wolf. Divided Soul.”

was originally published in East Germany in 1968, then in West Germany in 1970, and in 1971 in the English speaking world, tells the story of the unheroic, ordinary life of a young woman in the GDR.⁶⁰ As a British reviewer wrote in 1971, *The Quest for Christa T.* transferred “a vision of a short, private life lived on the other side of that fence or wall.”⁶¹ Although a novel, “several of the quotations [come] from diaries, sketches, and letters from real-life sources.”⁶² While “nowhere in her 235-page novel does Miss Wolf question the ideas of socialism,” the review continued, “she deals with the reality of life in East Germany,” a “world of people without imagination.”⁶³ Wolf conveyed a very subtle insight into the conformity of life under East German socialism.

Soon after the book's appearance, literary authorities harshly denounced the book's pessimism and lack of a socialist hero, and it was withdrawn from sale in East Germany.⁶⁴ This fall from favor was all the greater because she had won a national prize for her previous novel *Der Geteilte Himmel* (1963, *The Divided Heaven*).⁶⁵ The state's open rejection of Wolf led to the Western media describing her as having “retired in resignation to her lonely desk.”⁶⁶ Yet, her withdrawal into privacy was not eternal. Several years later, in 1976, Wolf protested publicly against the expulsion of the non-conformist singer and song-writer Wolf Biermann, which resulted in her exclusion from the GDR Writers' Union Congress.⁶⁷ But even when speaking out against the East German leadership, she never considered leaving East Germany. Instead she remained a “loyal dissident,”⁶⁸ hoping to “revivify the antifascist, anticapitalist cause.”⁶⁹ As her novels were very personal and strongly autobiographical, reflecting her notion of “subjective authenticity,”⁷⁰ she had turned into a kind of “Mother Confessor” to thousands of people in the GDR, who wrote letters to her about their own private lives.⁷¹ In her decision

⁶⁰ Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.*

⁶¹ Coleman, “From Behind the Wall,” 33.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “East Germans Denounce Novel on Women's Travail,” 40.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Wolf, *Der Geteilte Himmel*.

⁶⁶ “East Germans Denounce Novel on Women's Travail,” 40.

⁶⁷ Our Foreign Staff, “Writers Are Barred,” 9.

⁶⁸ Webb, “Christa Wolf Obituary.”

⁶⁹ Kotkin, Gross, *Uncivil Society*, 38.

⁷⁰ Webb, “Christa Wolf Obituary.”

⁷¹ Hafner, “A Nation of Readers Dumps Its Writers.”

to remain loyal to the system but not dampen her critical views, Wolf was one of the few non-conformist authors inside the 'Other Europe' that managed to bridge the gap between the intellectual elite and the 'normal people.'

The Polish poet and later Nobel-Prize winner Wisława Szymborska also tried to remain largely apolitical in her poetry, though "with an especially acute sense of irony and humor."⁷² Western readers were fascinated by her "quiet apolitical voice," which represented "a distinct force" in contemporary Poland, demonstrably influencing the younger generation of poets.⁷³ This interest extended to Western literary scholars and writers.⁷⁴ When the political situation tightened in Poland in the 1980s, Szymborska contributed to the *samizdat* periodical *Arka* under the pseudonym Stańczykówna, as well as to the Paris-based journal *Kultura*.⁷⁵ This degree of involvement carried the risk of losing one's job, having one's children institutionalized in a government orphanage, or even long-term imprisonment. This kept many women from challenging the censorship system and producing literature that could provoke state interference.

DISILLUSIONEMENT AFTER '68

Political disillusionment and loss of faith in the government's ability and willingness to change could be so dominant, however, that it served as an especially forceful catalyst for enlisting in non-official spheres of literary activity. As a result of the criminalization of all uncensored literary activity, publishing non-conformist literature created an immense danger for authors. From this followed that the whole movement of uncensored publishing, consisting mainly of intellectuals,⁷⁶ was not only an intellectual elite, but also an elite that was prepared to accept persecution, as well as social degradation and stigmatization.

Similar to the professional break that many non-conformist thinkers experienced, the Czech events of 1968 proved an emotional and political

⁷² Sukenick, "One Thing Is Sure, Uncertainty," BR9.

⁷³ Anders, "The Revenge of the Mortal Hand."

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Neubauer, "Introduction," 57.

⁷⁶ "Nearly half of the *samizdat* writers had academic jobs; a lot of writers, artists, and actors published regularly in different *samizdat* journals," Reddaway, *Uncensored Russia*, 23.

turning point in the lives of many intellectuals, who soon turned to the unofficial spheres of cultural activity.⁷⁷ The invasion of Czechoslovakia, as a political confrontation, resulted in many intellectuals turning away from the official culture. In the life stories of underground Czech writers, which Michael Long has analyzed, 1968 became a metaphor for disappointment and disillusionment. For the country's "academic, cultural, and artistic elite," in particular, "it meant the abandonment of hope for an intellectual life free from government interference."⁷⁸ In the life stories of Hungarian non-conformist authors 1968 appears less crucial as a political marker than the Hungarian tragedy of 1956, but it nevertheless remained influential. In a 2005 interview with the Hungarian *samizdat* writer János Kenedi, he expresses how the relationship between the invasion of Czechoslovakia and his personal decision to start writing in the underground were closely connected. Kenedi interprets 1968 as a fixed point on the road to the intellectuals' disillusionment with the communist regime. In 1968 "it became clear that there was no difference in reaction between the '56 revolution and the kind of compromise that the Czechs were trying to make." Therefore he decided to "continue writing and thinking" the way he had been "writing and thinking before, but without considering censorship at all." In August 1968 he quit the newspaper he worked for, and decided to write only in *samizdat*. He was glad that he was not in the same situation as many of his friends, who were "fired for writing *samizdat*." Rather, it had been his own choice to leave.⁷⁹

In contrast to the professional break described earlier, when the state took an active role in shaping the individual's life, the events of 1968 resulted only indirectly in a new consciousness and understanding. Kenedi's remark that "[i]t was my choice, my decision to leave," reveals something about the value given to the control he felt he had over his own deeds and the course of his life. Stressing that leaving the official sphere was entirely his own decision and not a result of the state's repressive measures offers an insight into the way individuals anticipated confrontation with the state by taking the first step. Kenedi foresaw the state's reaction and decided to limit his literary involvement to activities outside of the censors' reach in the form of *samizdat*. As such, disillusionment contributed to the individual's active withdrawal from the official

⁷⁷ Compare *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Long, "Dissidence in Czechoslovakia," 5.

⁷⁹ Kenedi, interview by the author.

public sphere. The joint awareness of taking risks strengthened the connectedness of the members of this literary community.

Much of the uncensored literature reveals something about the strategies of non-conformist writers in those moments when confrontation with the state was at its peak: when they were investigated, interrogated and imprisoned.⁸⁰ While these accounts detail how to best face this conflict, they are all based on the established political line between the official and the unofficial sphere. The question, however, of the impact of a first interrogation or investigation on an individual and their possible immersion into unofficial spheres hints at a possible third road into non-conformity and spiritual independence. In his autobiography, the Russian *samizdat* author Vladimir Bukovsky recounts his first experiences with publishing a journal while still in school and the subsequent reaction of the officials that left deep traces on his political and moral attitude, as well as developing his inner rebellion. After many years of studying Russian literary heroes only and being taught to dismiss “negative heroes” as “literary juggling, which was harmful to the people,” students started writing “parodies” of those “decadent prestidigitations,” “weaving in incidents from school life.” When a classmate provided a typewriter, someone else offered services as an illustrator, and the rest served as authors, they had their first journal.⁸¹

When talking about these first experiences with the journal, Bukovsky stresses the journal’s non-political nature: “none of us had the slightest intention of giving the journal any political overtones—it was all just a joke.”⁸² Years of boredom “exploded in a devastating parody of life at school and in the Soviet Union in general.” Even indirectly, “ambiguous jokes, parodies, and lampoons of the propaganda clichés” reflected their “new attitude to Soviet life” and “showed through every line.”⁸³ They were confronted with the consequences of their actions, however, when they showed the journal to their teachers who were not amused in the slightest. “Trembling, their faces pale and drawn,” the teachers assured them that the journal was a “failure, the jokes feeble, and the whole thing politically wrong.” Everyone left “feeling as if someone had died.”⁸⁴ The repercussion spread beyond, to the school’s disciplinary

⁸⁰ See Boobbyer, “In Search of Inner Freedom,” 95.

⁸¹ Bukovsky, *To Build a Castle*, 122.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 126.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

procedure, to the City Committee's headquarters, where Bukovsky was interrogated.

The description of his first interrogation brims with "swelling rage." He felt as if he was "brandishing that long-awaited machine gun." Through the interrogation he finds his voice, ignoring their interruptions, to sermonize on "serfdom in the villages, about the drunkenness, the thieving, the endless lying" that sickened him despite being only seventeen. Not expecting official disagreement, the state's subsequent threat to send him to a labor camp and prevent him from studying initiated a psychological process that released a powerful feeling of rebellion, and the unwillingness to ever cooperate with "these dimwitted old men and women in the City Committee."⁸⁵ He then knew he would "never go to a factory to be tempered in the furnace of labor—they would have to kill me first!" He insisted he would go to college, even if he "got a bloody nose for it." He no longer wanted to be "a thing," but instead "a human being."⁸⁶ The interrogation sparked Bukovsky's resistance, a feeling that was widespread among those who would later turn towards the unofficial spheres. After he suffered the regime's interference in his normal life, an anonymous Polish intellectual recalled how he decided not to allow the regime to maltreat his natural right to express his opinion: "To break this paralyzing fear I began signing the first issues of [the Warsaw *samizdat* journal] *Biuletyn Informacyjny* with my own name. But I did it also out of pure anger."⁸⁷

Be it rebellion, anger, or resistance, these emotional reactions characterized the origins of non-conformism, the unwillingness to further comply with the system. Instead of breaking the author, punishment and interrogation often produced a counter-effect. The Polish intellectual Eugeniusz Smolar emigrated to London in 1970, and established the intellectual émigre journal *Aneks* with his brother Alexander Smolar, distributing Polish underground literature to the West. Before that, he was active in the Polish literary underground. In retrospect, he saw the reason for his own non-conformist activity as the result of three emotions, provoked by the ruling political system. First, it was "anger at what happened, at people being imprisoned"; second, it was "hatred for the

⁸⁵ Ibid., 130.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Lopinski, Moskit, and Wilk, *Konspira*, 138–39.

regime,” which was responsible for the imprisonment of all his friends after 1968; and third it was “loyalty to the friends.”⁸⁸

The anger, hatred, and loyalty sequence represents the logic of the emerging resistance to the regime. Disappointment about the government’s non-fulfillment of its political promises replaced conformity with outrage. Seeing friends and families suffer under the regime gave rise to a strong sense of loyalty and responsibility to try to change the situation. Activities whose origins were often apolitical turned political when faced with persecution. The mostly apolitical literary circles, in particular, gained an overtly militant dimension at the moment they were confronted with trials against writers and their works. As the Russian scholar Oleg Kharkhordin notes: “when discussions in informal literary circles of *belles lettres* suddenly faced the problem of the political trial of two authors, Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuri [sic] Daniel, they turned political: the same practices and channels of circulation now carried information about politics and opposition to the regime.”⁸⁹

In so far as these experiences were shared by writers and intellectuals from the ‘Other Europe,’ non-conformism did not remain an individual experience but bound together individuals across Eastern Europe. Through a series of shared experiences, individual decisions to resist state conformity developed into a movement.

CROSS-BORDER SOLIDARITY

Non-conformist activists started to act in solidarity, and subsequently developed into an imagined community. Although non-conformism emerged from biographical breaks that left deep traces on individuals’ lives, strong personal ties offered an alternative way of life that was only possible under the given historical circumstances. Martin Palous, one of the founding members of the Charter 77 movement, considered non-conformism representative not only of a group of repressed individuals but also of a circle of kindred spirits. Having lost their jobs, careers, and social status, this collective experience created friendships. “Obviously we all lost a lot of things, opportunities to follow our careers,” Palous

⁸⁸ Smolar, “From Memories to Legacies.”

⁸⁹ Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*, 314.

recalls. But they received “friendships with interesting people” as a sort of “reverse compensation for these losses.”⁹⁰

By uncovering the close relationship between the loss of his former life, a newly developed circle of friends, and an emerging form of intellectualism that shaped these spheres of underground activity, Palous reveals a crucial aspect of the non-conformist movement, namely its profound ambiguity. Censorship and discrimination could not be perceived as positive experiences. However, life in a sphere of unofficial cultural and political activity that shared the common and clearly defined enemy of state socialism manifested a very special community. Relationships between the writers and activists were not only professional but also personal. Friendship was a fundamental element of the community.⁹¹

With time, the emerging circles of writers, publishers, and distributors strengthened the existing connections between those in the underground and those in exile:

This process began because the seeds linked kindred souls, founded friendships, and strengthened our spiritual bonds through common interest, enthusiasm, and exclusiveness. The new science provided us with a common language and a shared point of view. A common way of thinking began to mature, our friendship was being born, the roots of a new and true culture.⁹²

Despite the common experience of a biographical break, it appears that many underground writers resisted the temptation to write political literature. From their experiences of the Soviet instrumentalization of literature, which forced writers to become political activists, many of them developed an individual aversion to political uses of literature.

This led to a discussion about the possibility of non-political literature. Michael Scammell, the editor of *Index on Censorship*, formulated this paradoxical situation of writers in the Soviet Union by way of a question to Joseph Brodsky: “Is it possible at all to be a true writer in the Soviet Union without being forced into such a position?”⁹³ Brodsky’s reply reveals his strong aversion to the forced transformation of the

⁹⁰ “Martin Palous,” cited in Long, *Making History*, 92–93.

⁹¹ See Kadushin’s “strategy for analyzing friendship” in “Friendship Among the French Financial Elite,” 204.

⁹² Havel and Neubauer, “Man Hu? A Greeting Card to Markéta,” 22.

⁹³ Cited in Scammell, “Interview with Josif Brodsky,” 152.

writer into a political entity. "In my opinion," he said, "it is complete nonsense when the writer is forced to become a political activist."⁹⁴ The Czech novelist Ludvík Vaculík accused the regime of having taken the liberty and freedom of the writer to remain outside the sphere of politics. He argued, however, that it was up to the writers not to let themselves be dragged into the orbit of literary propaganda. In this way, publishing in the West bypassed censorship while remaining outside the political sphere.

In spite of their strong desire to express unhappiness with the literary politics of the state, Vaculík reminded his colleagues of the danger of resisting the regime's understanding of literature: "He who feels impelled to write against the regime all the time is allowing himself to be prevented by the regime from writing about anything else."⁹⁵ To write openly against the Soviet state was understood as contributing to the political polarization of literature. Refusing to write in accordance with the regime did not automatically mean that the regime had not shaped a writer's attitude towards literature. From a novelist's perspective, Vaculík believed *belles lettres* and literature incited political action as two opposing concepts, which should not be intermingled. Otherwise, a writer would conform to the logic of the system and write for propagandistic purposes. Sinyavsky called this "a literary law to which Russian authors have bent their heads and fallen in love with their serfdom."⁹⁶ Brodsky similarly stated that

[i]f by committed you mean literature in the service of a certain political creed, then let me tell you straight that such a literature is mere conformity of the worst kind. A writer always envies a boxer or a revolutionary. He longs for action and, wishing to take a direct part in "real" life, makes his work serve immediate political aims.⁹⁷

Real—that is politically independent literature—was the aim of many uncensored writers. According to Milan Kundera, Soviet officials "forget that any genuine literature eludes this sort of evaluation, that it eludes the Manichaeism of propaganda."⁹⁸ Beyond the simple aversion to polit-

⁹⁴ Ibid., 153.

⁹⁵ Vaculík, "I Can't Complain: An Interview with the Czech Novelist," 48.

⁹⁶ Sinyavsky, "Literatur als Prozess," 134. Translated from German by the author.

⁹⁷ Cited in Scammel, "Interview with Josif Brodsky," 153.

⁹⁸ Kundera, "Comedy is Everywhere," 5–6.

ical uses of literature, Brodsky developed a line of thinking that may have influenced other writers. He argued that writing, as a mental activity, is never in itself intended to lead to immediate action, since it would lose its underlying significance:

I must say that any kind of civic activity simply bores me to death. While the brain is thinking in political terms and thinks of itself as getting somewhere, it is all very interesting, attractive, and exciting, and everything seems fine. But when these thoughts reach their logical conclusion, that is when they result in some sort of action, then they give rise to a terrible sense of disillusionment, and then the whole thing is boring.⁹⁹

The quest was to decouple the act of literary creation and the immediate realization of its ideas, which socialist realism presented as an inseparable unity. The common aversion to the politicization of literature in the name of the state, combined with shared experiences of state intrusion into personal lives, created an ideal breeding ground for the development of a community. This non-conformist literary community developed not only inside one country, but across borders.

Throughout the ‘Other Europe,’ writers who propagated officially unacceptable conceptions of what literature stood for faced similar forms of persecution and repression. Political persecution represented “the initial difference between dissidents and others,”¹⁰⁰ “marking” a person as belonging to the non-conformist community. As the state relied on force, non-conformist circles were imprinted by strong emotional bonds.¹⁰¹ Indeed, it was from these shared experiences that close ties between various local groups developed, micro-communities that consisted of circles of friends with similar experiences. After 1989 in particular, the power of *samizdat* lay in its social lifestyle and interaction:

Samizdat are not just written products. It is a whole milieu, a functioning artistic microcosm at the edge of the official [...]. It is something like a lifestyle of marginality. To live at the

⁹⁹ Cited in Scammel, “Interview with Josif Brodsky,” 151–52.

¹⁰⁰ Tchouikina, “Anti-Soviet Biographies,” 132.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 120.



Figure 4: Photograph of a meeting of the Polish-Czech Solidarity group at the Czech-Polish border, 1978. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

margins creates the best conditions for an aesthetic *Eigensinn* [stubbornness].¹⁰²

From the official perspective, emerging *samizdat* friendships could prove subversive, for they existed in “a zone of private loyalty that the state could not always reach.”¹⁰³ György Konrád described his audience as a “community limited in size, which also includes friends.”¹⁰⁴ To know that people had to bear the same, if not more difficult, situations brought people together.

Diverse estimations exist as to the real possibilities for different opposition movements to meet each other. The greatest difference regarding these ties is found between the perception of underground activists at home and émigrés in the West. When reconstructing intellectual ties between groups of underground writers in the ‘Other Europe,’ it is necessary to talk about an imagined community of letters. Direct contacts between activists from different parts of the region, including moving between countries inside the Soviet sphere, were limited. In the

¹⁰² See Herget and Wonder, “Einführung,” 27. Translation from German by the author.

¹⁰³ Boobbyer, “The Rebirth of Conscience,” 57.

¹⁰⁴ Konrád, “A Dissident’s Note,” 237.

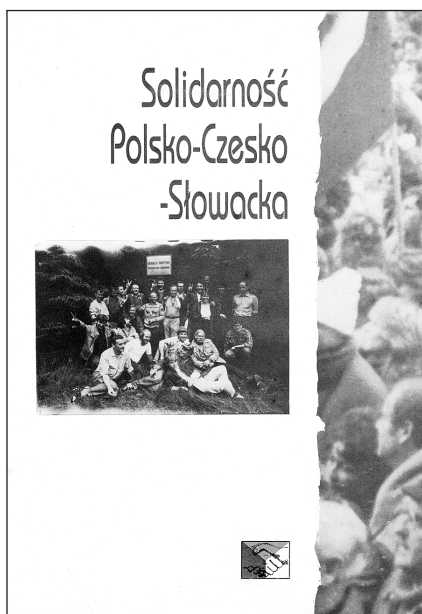


Figure 5: Cover of a publication of the Polish-Czech Solidarity group, 1989. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

words of the Hungarian thinker Gábor Demszky: "The best-known activists of the Polish opposition and of the Czechoslovak Charter 77 cannot travel abroad. We cannot meet them—we know each other's views only through *samizdat* publications."¹⁰⁵ Demszky's comments indicate that contact between participants was to a large extent restricted to an intellectual level. The Polish-Czechoslovak relations that became manifest in the association Polish-Czech-Slovak Solidarity (PCSS) were an exception.

Founded in 1981, the group aimed at exchanging information about democratic ideas in the two countries, as well as about the communist repression of non-conformist writers. Apart from these greater movements, individuals

from different countries and opposition movements, such as Havel and Michnik, met in personal circles where they discussed further actions or their latest writings. These personal meetings between individuals inside the Soviet sphere cannot be overestimated, however. It was, in the words of the German *samizdat* scholar Wolfgang Eichwede, an "Archipel samizdat."¹⁰⁶ Even if this archipelago consisted of many islands, they were separated from each other by an ocean.

¹⁰⁵ "Interview with Gábor Demszky, by Gabriel Partos." Budapest. January 19, 1988.

¹⁰⁶ Eichwede, "Archipel *Samizdat*," 8–19.

SAMIZDAT COMMUNITIES

Nevertheless, there were bridges between the *samizdat* isles. Personal meetings, including readings of *samizdat* literature and poetry, strengthened the feeling of belonging to and participating actively in a common project. Usually, the private flats of underground writers served as meeting places for these readings. One particular place in Budapest, for instance, was the Szamizdat Butik [*Samizdat* Boutique], a meeting point for those who wanted to purchase underground literature, which László Rajk began during the second half of the 1970s. Every Tuesday, Rajk ran this evening book shop, which was raided regularly. In 1983, the police “seized large quantities of underground literature, carted off duplicating machines, interrogated visitors to the ‘boutique’ and arrested the *samizdat* publishers.”¹⁰⁷

Although Hungary’s ‘democratic opposition’ was rather small, “consisting of 50 to 60 hard-core activists and several thousand supports,” it produced “several regular periodicals, novels, philosophical, historical and sociological treatises.”¹⁰⁸ Much of the material was produced in the shop or in private flats of non-conformist intellectuals. In particular, the rooms where the printing and duplication of *samizdat* took place were important spaces for underground writers to socialize. Illegality and a set of common values were a key part of the social activity, which helped the community define its identity. The joint production and “reading of forbidden literature” reinforced the sense of “being part of a wider dissident collective.” These *samizdat* networks even emitted the “pathos of a religious order,” as *samizdat* “spawned its own code words and anecdotes.” And books were bridges between similarly minded people “across wide geographical areas.”¹⁰⁹

As intellectuals beyond the Iron Curtain were often isolated from one another, this connective literature gained a specific social function.¹¹⁰ As *samizdat* was, in a material sense, difficult to read and aesthetically disturbing, knowledge of the personal stories and destinies of the authors hidden in the texts was a crucial element in motivating readers to engage with *samizdat* texts. In his famous article “An Anatomy of Reticence,”

¹⁰⁷ Laber, “Suddenly, Hungary Policed the Samizdat Boutique,” A31.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Tchouikina, “Anti-Soviet Biographies,” 134.

¹¹⁰ Booboyer, “Conscience in Literature,” 132.

Václav Havel describes how practical participation in the underground and common topics reflected collective convictions. Across the region, he could identify certain recurring motifs—"something like a 'common denominator'"—about East-Central European experience that were not simply coincidental, but rather communal. He expressed his conviction that "analogous experiences lead to analogous considerations, perspectives, and convictions."¹¹¹ Despite their widespread geographical dispersion, the intellectuals of this non-conformist literary community continuously reinforced and reinvented their common identity through their literary and theoretical contributions.

Shared experiences and their literary portrayal stimulated the search for like-minded people in other socialist states. The spread of news about the appearance of similar materials outside one's own nation raised the interest in foreign *samizdat* material. As a result, a great deal of *samizdat* material circulated secretly across the national borders inside the Soviet Bloc and was translated into other Central and East European languages (See for this figures 13–16 on pp. 210–212.). Soon, a great demand for foreign *samizdat* material developed inside the national *samizdat* communities. Tamás, who did not meet any of the Poles before '89, formulated his stance towards Polish underground writers as follows: "In a way, I lived in Poland. Metaphorically and psychologically I lived in Poland. The first time I ever physically set foot in Poland was in '95, but I followed the Polish events so much."¹¹²

In Hungary, opposition movements from other Soviet-governed countries, such as Charter 77, encouraged the formation of similar groups and the realization of like-minded activities.¹¹³ Miklós Haraszti argued that the Hungarian non-conformist movement started in 1977 with a declaration of solidarity with Charter 77. By this kind of solidarity he felt "we were not alone, that we had backers, be they publishers or co-oppositionists, which gave us courage."¹¹⁴ According to Haraszti, both co-oppositionists in other dominated countries and Western supporters could play this role. It was the *idea* of intellectual support that impacted the atmosphere inside the Hungarian opposition. This was especially true for Polish non-conformism. Tamás described his emotions towards

¹¹¹ Havel, "An Anatomy of Reticence," 16.

¹¹² Tamás, interview by the author.

¹¹³ See Demszky, *Samizdat 81–89*, Kenedi, *A Magyar Demokratikus Ellenzék Válsága*; and Csizmadia, "A samizdat szubkultúrája."

¹¹⁴ Haraszti, "From Memories to Legacies."

for Polish comrades as follows: “For me, Zbigniew Bujak and Andrzej Gazda and all these people, my heroes, you know, I heard them on [the] radio [...] for a decade, ten years of our life.” Indeed, he risked “my life to find out what is happening in Poland and I went to the library to read newspapers.”¹¹⁵ This was possibly due to the fact that the Hungarian *samizdat* movement was far weaker in number and effectiveness than the Polish and Russian non-conformists. The Hungarian opposition movement was quite modest after 1956, and the government did not feel as threatened as the governments of other countries, thus, it allowed for certain freedoms. One result was the absence of legal censorship.¹¹⁶ But this did not imply the absence of any control over communication. It was possible to express some dissent in certain official publications, but “authors and editors had themselves to decide on the limits to which they could go.”¹¹⁷ Hungary was thus the ideal model for internal censorship. Nevertheless, *samizdat* emerged in Hungary and established links to other *samizdat* movements in the region.

During a 1983 visit to Budapest, Hungarian *samizdat* activists seemed more daring to Jeri Laber, the executive director of the United States Helsinki Watch Committee.¹¹⁸ Raiding the famous Szamizdat Butik in Budapest in the 1980s several times, the police’s intensified activity did not really “reflect a change in policy as much as an effort to keep pace with a new belligerence on the part of the opposition.” But contrary to all predictions, literary opposition in Hungary grew continuously stronger after the suppression of the Polish self-governing trade union Solidarność (Solidarity) in 1981, which relied heavily on distributing its information via *samizdat*. And even if opposition in Hungary had not turned into a “new Poland,” she observed, Hungarian intellectuals were “greatly influenced by their Polish friends.” László Rajk told her that even before the rise of Solidarity, he had “learned his trade firsthand from underground Polish publishers in Warsaw.” Just as the underground Polish press had once “devoted whole issues to Hungarian *samizdat* writings,” in the early 1980s much of Hungarian *samizdat* devoted itself—out of a feeling of strong inter-oppositional solidarity—to writings by and about Solidarity.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Tamás, interview by the author.

¹¹⁶ Skilling, “Independent Communications,” 64.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 64.

¹¹⁸ Laber, “Suddenly, Hungary Policed the Samizdat Boutique,” A31.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Hungarian *samizdat* activists also felt enormous solidarity with the Russians. Tamás stressed the importance of Russian non-conformism by comparing the different national opposition movements:

we should not ever forget that the most important dissidents were the Russians. And you know, you cannot compare our role to theirs. They were the real ones. They took the real risks. And they were also more numerous, more varied, had greater political intelligence, and daring, and imagination; they were our ideas and they started in 1961, and now these heroic people who started it are all forgotten. The Ginzburgs and everyone. That was very sad, because they were the authentic heroes.¹²⁰

This example uncovers the strong emotional bonds between the individuals of the imagined community of non-conformists, in which the Russians set the moral standard. In Hungary, especially, well known for its ‘goulash communism’ (a term that refers to a lighter version of state socialism), underground activists looked with admiration to their Russian and Czech colleagues.¹²¹ As Haraszti explained, “[t]he case of Hungary was very different from Russia or Czechoslovakia. The real dissidents were there, people who with every movement consciously knew they *are* going to prison. That was sheer heroism.”¹²² The Hungarian journalist András Sugar also felt, Hungarian dissidents were different from their Soviet or Czechoslovakian counterparts.¹²³ In 1982, “the dissidents’ main political problem” was, as the Hungarian philosopher János Kiss argued, that they did not know “how to make statements of protest without losing touch with those who are dissatisfied with the system yet unwilling wholly to break with it.”¹²⁴ Hungarian intellectuals became “inconsequential” as they tried to keep “a foot in each camp,” which meant that they would “publish their less controversial works in official journals” and their more “daring ones in the mimeographed ‘Samizdat’ journals of the opposition.”¹²⁵ Possibly because of their compromised

¹²⁰ Tamás, interview by the author.

¹²¹ The term was coined by Dalos in *Archipel Gulasch*.

¹²² Haraszti, “From Memories to Legacies.”

¹²³ Apple, “Hungarian Dissent Takes a Soft Line,” A3.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

(non)conformism, Hungarian *samizdat* activists appreciated the more daring attitude of their Czech, Polish, and Russian neighbors.

Appeals by underground writers to support their friends in other Soviet countries were occasionally published in Western journals. These appeals initiated a gradual rapprochement between activists of different nationalities. In a letter by Marek Edelman and Jacek Kuron in the *New York Review of Books* (1988) a group of Polish oppositionists pleaded for a Polish-Russian dialogue: "We in Poland listen to news of you [Russian dissidents] with great attention and hope. We rejoice in every fact portending the rebirth of Russian culture and of the cultures of other peoples of the USSR."¹²⁶ Interest in the USSR's newly emerging underground movement yielded the call for an open public dialogue between free people, independent of official politics and questionable diplomatic agreements. The shared experience of censorship provided the movement's foundation.¹²⁷ The ultimate goal of regaining their freedom to write in conformity with their moral system—something that by necessity had to take place in unofficial spheres—emerged from the restrictions on the daily activities of many intellectuals.

Their anti-Soviet stance bound the dissident movements together. However, as Sinyavsky argues: "Dissidence in its wider sense is not one single, uniform party."¹²⁸ Instead, the non-conformist literary scene's complexity must be taken into account. In 1973 David Bonavia, the former London *Times* correspondent to Moscow who had been expelled in 1972, informed the West that "[t]he fragmentation of protest, and disruption of communication among actual or potential dissidents, is a strong factor working against the movements."¹²⁹

Jan Kavan recalls his own position inside the *samizdat* movement, which was, ideologically speaking, widely scattered: "I became part of a double-minority."¹³⁰ He was, first, "part of the minority who decided to be activist, despite the obvious dangers," and second, became "part of a further minority who continued to believe that some of the socialist ideas were viable, and who continued to differentiate between communism and socialism, which government propaganda tried to equate, and

¹²⁶ Edelman, et al., "For a Polish-Russian Dialogue."

¹²⁷ Tchouikina, "Anti-Soviet Biographies," 130.

¹²⁸ Sinyavsky, "Dissident Reflections," 91.

¹²⁹ Bonavia, *Fat Sasha and the Urban Guerilla*, 80.

¹³⁰ Cited in Randle, *People Power*, 151.

between the practice and some of the theories.”¹³¹ This shows how varied the sphere of the literary and political underground actually was. The social system of relationships inside one country, but also between the various groups of underground writers in the ‘Other Europe,’ produced internal disputes and quarrels. A frequent visitor to Czechoslovakia, the Czech-born British playwright Tom Stoppard witnessed the subtle debates between the different circles of non-conformist activists. He perceived these inherent conflicts and disagreements as part of a typical “family quarrel,” which indicates that he nevertheless viewed the group as a unity.¹³² Knowing about the existence of people in other communist countries who perhaps did not share the same political attitude, but shared their dissatisfaction with life under communism was far more important, contributing to a strong feeling of solidarity between the manifold groups.

THE AMBIGUOUS QUALITY OF *SAMIZDAT*

Samizdat is probably the best known form and genre of literature from the period of state socialism; however, it is not known, above all, for its contents and debates, but for its manufacturing process. Alexei A. Yakushev sees *samizdat*’s singularity precisely in its production methods: “What ultimately allows for the gathering of all these works into a single category—*Samizdat*—is, of course, the unique, idiosyncratic method of ‘publication,’ which occurs through *self*-reproduction, something analogous to the biological process of cell-multiplication.”¹³³ Due to the “high level of activity, both in terms of volume and extensiveness and, most important, in terms of regularity,” *samizdat* developed beyond national spaces into an international phenomenon.¹³⁴ Through its widespread production and circulation, *samizdat* became “a political, judicial, ideological, and psychological problem [in] the context of the Soviet system of government.”¹³⁵

Gayle Durham Hollander touches upon the inherent difficulty of the uncontrolled circulation of *samizdat*. He points out that an author, after

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Karel Bartosek, cited in Stoppard, “Prague: The Story of the Chartists,” 5.

¹³³ Yakushev, “The *Samizdat* Movement in the USSR,” 189.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 188.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 189.

handing the manuscript to friends, loses contact with it and often has no knowledge of the work's impact.¹³⁶ Dimitry S. Pospelovsky argues against this when pointing out that the circulation of the *samizdat* writer's works depended entirely on the literary consumer, and was thus "a better measuring stick of the author's talents" than official critics or *gosizdat* [the Soviet state publishing house].¹³⁷ Van het Reve was deeply convinced of the unquestionable quality of Soviet *samizdat*, saying "that people would not want to type 400 pages if it is rubbish."¹³⁸ Others argued that the fact that *samizdat* works were not exposed to censorship, and rarely to literary criticism, had a bearing on their quality. But the term *samizdat* did not automatically refer to high-quality writing, as Havel pointed out in 1968:

in *samizdat*, there will always be countless bad books or poems [...] If anything, there will be more bad ones than in the days of printing because [...] printing is still a more complicated process than typing. But even if, objectively, there were some possibility of selection, who could claim the right to exercise it? Who among us would dare to say that he can unerringly distinguish something of value [...] from its counterfeit? Who among us can know whether what may seem today to be marginal graphomania might not one day appear to our descendants as the most substantial writing in our time?¹³⁹

The literary quality of a publication in the underground was not a given, and the content was regularly one-sided, mirroring the exclusive political ideology of an individual or a group. Defending *samizdat*'s accuracy as a source of information in 1985, Thomas Oleszczuk touched on the question of possible bias which became particularly obvious in nationalist *samizdat* writings.¹⁴⁰

Being published in *samizdat* guaranteed neither quality nor ideological neutrality. Similarly, it is important not to generalize the character of *samizdat* and *tamizdat*, as they embraced a wide range of texts from doc-

¹³⁶ Hollander, "Political Communication and Dissent."

¹³⁷ Pospelovsky, "From Gosizdat to *Samizdat* and *Tamizdat*."

¹³⁸ Shenker, "A Dutch Outlet for Banned Soviet Writers," 2.

¹³⁹ Havel, "Six Asides About Culture," 132.

¹⁴⁰ On bias see Oleszczuk, "An Analysis of Bias in *Samizdat* Sources." On nationalism see Duncan, "The Fate of Russian Nationalism." See also Zisserman-Brodsky, *Constructing Ethnopolitics in the Soviet Union*, in particular Chapter 8.

uments of suffering to a wide variety of poetry and intellectual essays. Even *tamizdat* publishers in the West, such as van het Reve, rarely screened the arriving manuscripts for their quality carefully, or published according to their preferences. His daughter remembers that “[t]hey published what they could publish and did not consider if they were for or against the content of the texts.”¹⁴¹ Western publishers simply tried to mirror the “[b]road variety of political, literary, and philosophical and historical texts” of very different format and quality.¹⁴² The body of *samizdat* literature circulating inside the Eastern Bloc included literary journals, historical periodicals, and books by foreign authors, but also summaries of written works translated from various languages, especially Czech; extracts from foreign articles and letters; accounts of demonstrations in the USSR by Westerners on behalf of Soviet political prisoners; and lists of foreign civil rights groups who supported the first appeal to the United Nations of the Action Group for the Defense of Civil Rights.¹⁴³ *Samizdat* literature touched upon almost any topic that had been banned from the official press. And all these comprised an alternative framework for the exchange of thoughts. According to Alexei A. Yakushev in 1975, *samizdat* was “a kind of universe of discourse.”¹⁴⁴

Samizdat was produced throughout the ‘Other Europe,’ but most profusely in Poland, especially after the formation of KOR (Komitet Obrony Robotników), the Workers’ Defense Committee, in 1976. Stephen Kotkin and Jan T. Gross even argue that Poland was the only East European country that actually “*had* an opposition, which *imagined* itself as civil society.”¹⁴⁵ To a lesser degree, they acknowledged, Hungary also produced something like a ‘real’ opposition, in so far as the Hungarian Round Table Talks [Kerekasztal-tárgyalások] in the summer and autumn of 1989 represented formal negotiations between the socialist authorities and the newly evolving political elite, resulting in new elections. For “all other Eastern European countries,” the authors conclude, “the focus on the opposition falls into the realm of fiction.”¹⁴⁶ As ordinary people rarely appreciated non-conformist realms and their

¹⁴¹ Driessen van het Reve, December 9, 2013.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ A detailed description of *samizdat* journals and publishing houses in the different countries can be found in Skilling, “Independent Communications.”

¹⁴⁴ Yakushev, “The *Samizdat* Movement in the USSR,” 188.

¹⁴⁵ Kotkin and Gross, *Uncivil Society*, xiv.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

expressions in *samizdat* and *tamizdat*, they did not really threaten the existing political systems.

For Kotkin, the widespread employment of the term “civil society” seems entirely misleading when describing the activity of small intellectual and non-conformist groups in the ‘Other Europe.’ He wonders how a few “hundred (sometimes just several dozen) members of an opposition—with a handful of harassed illegal associations and underground self-publications” could appropriately be called “a ‘civil society?’”¹⁴⁷ In contrast to these scattered oppositions, hundreds of thousands of “party and state officials, political police operatives, [and] army officers” controlled all types of “property, public spaces, communications networks, and institutions.” Did they not represent the “real” society. Though acknowledging their moral importance, he stresses that small dissident groups did not constitute any kind of society.¹⁴⁸ The emergence of civil society in 1989 was all the more powerful, as it had not existed previously. Overstating intellectuals’ “real” power to challenge the establishment would, according to Kotkin, be a distortion of historical facts. In the end, it was the power of the “uncivil society,” namely “the incompetent, blinkered, and, ultimately bankrupt Communist establishments” that led to the revolutions of 1989.¹⁴⁹

Yet, Poland was different in this respect, as its opposition was indeed a mass phenomenon where the emergence of free and uncensored publications was one of the foundations of the entire Solidarity movement.¹⁵⁰ It was only when military rule was proclaimed in December 1981 that the independent publishing movement briefly withdrew into silence. Yet, by 1982, the movement had recovered and became “more institutionalised, and regional and national in scope.”¹⁵¹ Poland’s opposition—underpinned by the masses—became the Soviet Bloc’s sole “counterelite.”¹⁵² KOR’s uncensored publications, *Information Bulletin* and *Communiqué*, “lastingly breached the uncivil society’s monopoly on the circulation of ideas and information.”¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., xiv.

¹⁵⁰ Skilling, “Independent Communications,” 56.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 58.

¹⁵² Kotkin and Gross, *Uncivil Society*, 101.

¹⁵³ Ibid., xvii.

WOMEN AND *SAMIZDAT*

While the Polish opposition movement united workers and intellectuals, its leaders were almost exclusively “men—handsome men, groomed to appeal to the Western press: bearded, brawny, big-shouldered hunks with the defiant, charismatic stance of heroes.”¹⁵⁴ Wondering where the women of solidarity were, Shana Penn has revealed that women were not absent from the Polish underground. They had practically kept solidarity alive after martial law, but they were largely absent from English-language reports on the movement. Seven women in particular were heavily involved in establishing *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, the Polish solidarity movement’s primary newspaper, which appeared from February 1982. Although the “women of *Tygodnik Mazowsze*” and countless other women conspirators were largely overlooked in research about Solidarity,¹⁵⁵ they wrote, manufactured, and distributed this major outlet of the Polish *Drugi Obieg* [Second Circulation], as the Polish underground press was called.¹⁵⁶

One of the women, “Joanna,” is reported to have “worked on all aspects of the paper’s production and did extensive networking as well, making contact with international supporters, and feeding news to the foreign press such as the New York Times, Agence France Press, Radio Free Europe, and the BBC.”¹⁵⁷ The Polish underground press, as a “nonfactory” site of Solidarity, turned into a “chief playing field on which women” were able to “carve out distinctive, influential roles for themselves in the opposition.”¹⁵⁸ Until 1989, the Polish underground press was “an enterprise of unique scale in the Soviet Bloc,” in which “[t]housands of editors, printers, binders and book distributors” were employed in “several dozen clandestine publishing houses.” But the new “freedom of expression” seriously questioned the need and usefulness of this no-longer-needed publishing endeavor.¹⁵⁹ But until the wall came down,

¹⁵⁴ Penn, *Solidarity’s Secret*, 5.

¹⁵⁵ Grudzińska-Gross, *The Art of Solidarity*, xii.

¹⁵⁶ Sukenick, “One Thing Is Sure, Uncertainty,” BR9.

¹⁵⁷ Penn, *Solidarity’s Secret*, 156.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵⁹ Husarska, “Up from the Underground in Poland,” BR1.

both women's and men's participation in this "glorious business" was much needed and appreciated.¹⁶⁰

Almost simultaneously to women's active contribution to the Polish underground movement, even more explicit forms of feminist *samizdat* started to emerge, most prominently in Russia in the late 1970s. Shusha Guppy stated in 1981 that "[u]ntil recently, such *samizdat* (clandestine, self-published) publications of Russian dissidents as have reached the West have not dealt with women's problems in particular."¹⁶¹ On December 10, 1979, the anniversary of the UN's adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights, the "first specifically feminist *Samizdat*" was published.¹⁶² Soon after its first appearance, the Soviet authorities forced its authors to leave Russia, hoping to destroy their movement. Instead, the movement went underground, where other women continued the work "against seemingly insurmountable difficulties"¹⁶³ that this *samizdat* could appear from 1979 until 1984. In a 1980 interview Tatiana Mamonova reflects on the special threat of the feminist movement to the Soviet leadership, and concludes that "women's rebellion [was] different," because it compromised the elites "in front of the world," as they had "always stressed equality."¹⁶⁴ A few issues of the unofficial Leningrad journal *Almanac: Women and Russia* appeared¹⁶⁵ before "its editors were invited to apply for an exit visa,"¹⁶⁶ a pressure that was exerted until they finally ended up in the West. While *Women and Russia* managed to "circulate *samizdat* fashion, from hand to hand, Soviet authorities quickly seized most of the copies (some had already been smuggled to the West)."¹⁶⁷ In form of a collection of "articles, essays, poems, and case histories about women's specific problems," this feminist *samizdat* served to expose the "discrepancy between official ideology and the nightmarish reality of their lives," where they were affected by "abortion in 'meat-grinders,'" "violent rape by drunken husbands," and "'mini concentration camps' for children."¹⁶⁸ Mamonova's growing

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Guppy, "The Women's Camp," 35.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Douglas, "Russian Feminists Challenge Phallocracy," 2.

¹⁶⁵ *Almanach for Women About Women*, no.1 December 10, 1979.

¹⁶⁶ Winter, "Less Equal than Others," 41.

¹⁶⁷ Ruthchild, "Sisterhood and Socialism."

¹⁶⁸ Guppy, "The Women's Camp," 35.

involvement with the non-conformists was “paralleled by a growing resentment at the social inequalities women suffered.”¹⁶⁹

Realizing that no women’s movement existed and that dissidents taunted her ideas,¹⁷⁰ Mamonova felt the urgent need to form a non-conformist group that focused only on women’s concerns. In the very beginning, Mamonova’s first initiative did not propose a particular feminist approach. By means of *Women and Russia* it addressed itself “not to dissidents, or to women dissidents, or to women artists, or even to women of the intelligentsia,” but “to women” in general.¹⁷¹ In an article for a Western feminist journal in 1989, Tatyana Mamonova remembers that their almanac was thought to represent people’s voice.¹⁷² Having learned a “little bit” about feminist movements in the West, they saw their greatest accomplishment in the discovery of their own feminist history.¹⁷³ Even if they had not yet identified the specific political agenda of their feminist group, their publication mirrored a wide variety of political views, opinions and feminist concepts. The differences expressed in *Women and Russia* served to “underline their belief in the right to hold and voice one’s own opinions, in the freedom of speech and the press.” As feminism was so new to the Soviet Union, many issues had to be “sorted out and discussed,” and the almanac wanted “to provide a forum for this debate.”¹⁷⁴

In Yugoslavia, too, a feminist movement emerged in 1978, as Slavenka Drakulić recalls. The hardship of everyday life during socialism, which especially affected women, did not prevent her and her friends from forming the country’s first feminist group. Originally, they did not know how to organize themselves, but they dared to publish, starting small with articles. In a matter of days, they were severely attacked “by the official women’s organizations, women’s conference, by politicians, university professors, famous columnists, for importing foreign ideology.” They realized that a feminist in the Soviet Union was not only “a man-eater,” but “an enemy of the state.” Some of them received “threatening letters. Some got divorced, accused of neglecting their families.” At the same time, increasing numbers of women joined their meetings

¹⁶⁹ Women and Eastern Europe Group, “Introduction,” 10.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷² Mamonova, “Women and Politics in the USSR,” 25.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Women and Eastern Europe Group, “Introduction,” 11.

and formed other groups.¹⁷⁵ The authorities' reaction to women's often subtle resistance regularly pushed women back into the private realm, as they feared for their children. Some key female figures and initiatives, nevertheless, remained active and shaped the emerging underground.

THE *SAMIZDAT* CORPUS

Just as women's *samizdat* production mirrored their lived experience, the very difficult political conditions under which *samizdat* was produced impacted the texts' quality and character. As different oppressed sectors of society expressed their increasing desire for reliable information through *samizdat*, this literature documents many of those aspects of life under Soviet power where the official press was most inadequate. It illuminates them in precise, scientific language. Like most of the early *samizdat* studies, J. M. Feldbrugge uses *samizdat* as a source of information that was covered inadequately by the official press.¹⁷⁶ *Samizdat* served as a channel of dissatisfaction, hoping to provide "regular, accurate, concrete information about a steadily widening variety of groups" that "both articulates the demands of aggrieved groups in society and throws fresh light on those institutions with which the groups conflict."¹⁷⁷ Taking into account its unorthodox production, appearance, and circulation, Gayle Durham Hollander argues that the *samizdat* phenomenon impeded "the effectiveness of the legitimate system by producing 'noise'" that purposefully tried "to break up myths of official presentation."¹⁷⁸ This unorthodox literary noise created dissonance in the official chorus of literary production. Simultaneously, it provided non-conformist people inside the 'Other Europe' with a broad encyclopedia of restricted or even forbidden discourses. Offering an aesthetic alternative, *samizdat* authors tried to overcome socialist realism's stylistic restrictions by creating a "close circle of like-minded people who spoke their own language."¹⁷⁹ Due to their mission to document and bear witness to

¹⁷⁵ Drakulić, *How We Survived Communism*, 128–29.

¹⁷⁶ Feldbrugge, *Samizdat and Political Dissent*.

¹⁷⁷ Reddaway, *Uncensored Russia*, 17.

¹⁷⁸ Hollander, "Political Communication and Dissent," 274. See also Johnston, "What is the History of *Samizdat*?"

¹⁷⁹ Oushakine, "The Terrifying Mimicry of *Samizdat*," 195.

certain historical events and developments, many of the circulated works did not pursue a high literary standard:

Dissident literature is a prison literature, to a large extent the opus of women and men who have been serving sentences, normally long sentences, for “political crimes” against the Soviet Union or its satellites. It is a literature of suffering, of bearing witness to injustices—testimonies of any sort from prisons, penal camps, and banishment. It turns the authors into a sort of elite of the suffering.¹⁸⁰

During political crises—such as that after the Prague invasion in 1968 or the Polish Solidarity movement in 1980—the production of document-type works was most crucial. In times of political relaxation, however, the thaw following Stalin’s death or the period of Gorbachev’s reform policy (*perestroika* and *glasnost*)—there was an increase in the amount of artistic works and intellectual debates in the frame of uncensored literature. David Floyd, a Russian-language translator, described this change of documents during a conference on the future of *samizdat* in London in 1971:

Perhaps the most important thing is that there is going to be a change in kind, a change in the nature of the documents. [...] I am thinking [...] about the political works. I would have thought these would change from the sort of almost desperate scream of protest about the nature of the regime, a sort of direct “Down-with-the-regime!” type of document, to rather more considered things of the type which one also has seen.¹⁸¹

During the same conference, Abraham Brumberg acknowledged that a maturation process was taking place in the sphere of *samizdat*. The production methods and the contents of *samizdat* were undergoing a change from the “spontaneous outcries of outrage in 1967 and 1968 [...] to more profound consideration of historical questions, philosophic questions, political questions, and so on.”¹⁸² Thus, a certain political situation

¹⁸⁰ Bailey, “Einleitung,” 7. Translated from German by the author.

¹⁸¹ See Floyd, “Opening Statements by Panelists,” in *The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects*, Sheet 5.

¹⁸² See Brumberg, “Opening Statements by Panelists,” in *The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects*, 7.

left an imprint on the content, character, and aesthetics of a *samizdat* work.

With the increasing presence of *samizdat* texts in the West in the 1970s, Western scholars began to debate and analyze the phenomenon of *samizdat* intensely. A number of studies were concerned with the role of human rights,¹⁸³ the condition of the regimes, the situation of minorities and religious groups,¹⁸⁴ and the national *samizdat* phenomena.¹⁸⁵ Many collections and anthologies of *samizdat* documents were published¹⁸⁶ in addition to documentary books and autobiographical pieces written by émigrés.¹⁸⁷ Part of the debate aimed to identify what *samizdat* actually was, what it should be, and what its problems were. Albert Boiter's comment from 1972 illustrates the difficulty of determining the body of sources that belong to *samizdat*:

Most of us would have difficulty, for example, in stretching our ill-defined conception of *samizdat* to cover the large category of material which consists of translations into Russian of the works of Orwell, Huxley, Gailbraith, Conquest, Brzezinski and so on, or the *samizdat* circulation of translations of articles from the *New York Times*, from the *Washington Post*, from Western communist newspapers or from international human rights journals.¹⁸⁸

Boiter even went so far as to possibly include the Bible into the *samizdat* sphere: "The bible [sic] itself is one of the most coveted *samizdat*

¹⁸³ Chalidze, *To Defend These Rights*.

¹⁸⁴ Meerson-Aksenov and Shragin, eds., *Political, Social, and Religious Thought*.

¹⁸⁵ On Hungary, see Gyarmathy, Demszky and Lévy, eds., *Szamizdat '81-89*, and Molnár, *A "Hatvanas évek" emlékezete*. On Czechoslovakia see Posset, "Tschechische samizdat"; Prečan, "Questions of Terminology in Independent Literature" and "Samizdat Periodicals in Czechoslovakia, 1977-88"; Šimečka, "Bücher-Unbücher" and Vaculík, "A Padlock for Castle Schwarzenberg."

¹⁸⁶ Meerson-Aksenov and Shragin, eds., *Political, Social, and Religious Thought*. Saunders, *Samizdat: Voices of the Soviet Opposition*; Scammell, ed., *Russia's Other Writers*; Medvedev, *The Samizdat Register 1/2* and Gerstenmaier, *The Voices of the Silent*.

¹⁸⁷ See for instance Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*.

¹⁸⁸ Boiter, "Samizdat: Primary Source Material in the Study of Current Soviet Affairs," Texas, March 15-18, 1972. Samizdat General 1972, Box 294, Folder 7, Sheet 1-21, Sheet 4. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

items, due to the fact that the Soviet government does not permit the printing of enough bibles to meet the popular demand.”¹⁸⁹ In the case of Czechoslovakia, as Rosemary Kavan recalls, an absurd “Kafkaesque situation had arisen.” Czechs could actually “read their own authors in their own language,” because many people had risked “their liberties smuggling manuscripts out of Czechoslovakia and the printed article back again.”¹⁹⁰ *Samizdat*, then, was only a partially satisfying solution, since *samizdat* editions of new books were very limited in number. Havel also acknowledges the relevance of publishing houses in the West, without which “contemporary Czech literature would cease to exist.”¹⁹¹ The production of larger editions involved printing, which automatically “meant publication abroad.”¹⁹² In this way, the line between *samizdat* and *tamizdat* became blurred and the transition between the two publication modes fluid. The influx of single volumes of Western books into the Eastern Bloc, which were then reproduced manually and circulated in *samizdat*, contributed to the inclusion of many canonical Western texts into *samizdat*’s body.

Such a wide definition is based on the understanding of *samizdat* as literature being printed or circulated outside the sphere of censorship. According to Vilém Prečan, *samizdat* comprises

the sum total of literary works from all spheres of creative as well as scholarly writing, including political journalism in all its particular forms, which emerged among independent activists [...]. It is entirely right and proper to use such a broad definition of the term “literature” for the phenomenon of independent literature and *samizdat*.¹⁹³

Many forbidden Western classics were translated and circulated in the literary underground, and were thus part of the *samizdat* corpus. The translation of Western literature into Eastern European languages provided critical Western writers the opportunity to gain an international literary existence across the Iron Curtain. The circulation of forbidden Western literature in the literary underground can be perceived as a starting point for “the

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., Sheet 11.

¹⁹⁰ Kavan, *Love and Freedom*, 266.

¹⁹¹ Cited in Garton Ash, *Freedom for Publishing*, 21.

¹⁹² Kavan, *Love and Freedom*, 266.

¹⁹³ Prečan, “Independent Literature and *Samizdat*,” 93.

recovery of the heritage of the West.”¹⁹⁴ In 2006, Jiřina Šiklová retrospectively proposed a similarly broad understanding of *samizdat* when she presented Jean-Paul Sartre’s 1972 article, “Socialism that Came in from the Cold,”¹⁹⁵ as one of the first *samizdat* pieces to reach a Czech audience. She stated that Sartre’s introduction to a book by Antonín Liehm was “one of the first things which was rewritten and multiplied in some copies.” Indeed, “it was one of the first so-called *samizdat*.”¹⁹⁶ French authors such as Albert Camus or Antoine de St. Exupéry, whose works were not available in official bookstores, gained access to the sphere of *samizdat* and became widely circulated bestsellers. In a 1993 article, Ivan Havel and Zdenek Neubauer recount their memories of the arrival of forbidden Western literary works that initiated their encounter with the ‘other’ literature:

Little by little, however, unusual, curious, and strange books began descending into our wilderness [writers such as Capra, Hofstadter, Gardner, Koestler]—a manna from heaven in our intellectual desert, nourishment for us who were in danger of slipping into self-satisfied amateurism and doomed to perpetual self-confirmation. [...] Those books not only captivated us: they filled us with enthusiasm. They recalled something vaguely familiar, something long lost which was close again.¹⁹⁷

In the same way that *samizdat* reached the West, Western publications found their way into the Soviet literary underground.

The literary underground’s inability to rise to official publishing standards quickly developed into a resistance to official publishing norms and a struggle for aesthetic freedom. *Samizdat* developed its own aesthetic conventions. With the exception of a range of art journals, *samizdat* texts were rarely printed on nice paper, nor were they properly formatted or illustrated. But in doing so they propagated, as Ann Komaromi stresses, a new textual aesthetic, namely one of deformation.¹⁹⁸ She underlines *samizdat*’s subversive nature and locates its most potent contribution in the aesthetics of the *samizdat* text: “The wretched material character of the *samizdat* text evokes the deep abyss between the mate-

¹⁹⁴ Tall, “Behind the Scenes,” 190.

¹⁹⁵ Sartre, “Der Sozialismus.”

¹⁹⁶ Šiklová, “From Memories to Legacies.”

¹⁹⁷ Havel and Neubauer, “Man Hu? A Greeting Card to Markéta,” 20.

¹⁹⁸ Komaromi, “The Material Existence of Soviet Samizdat,”

rial and the ideal and between the desire for culture and the fear of its destruction.”¹⁹⁹ She sees the difference between the *samizdat* and the official text as crucial, and effectively decouples *samizdat*’s political content from its meaning as a material object, drawing attention to the part its physicality played in *samizdat*’s reading practices.

By proposing an alternative to the aesthetics propagated by the literary elite, *samizdat* criticized the core of socialist realism, meaning the perfect unity of content and form. A reader of *samizdat* himself, David Bonavia recalled in 1973 that he would never forget the physical experience of reading the material. “[I]ts feel and smell” created memories that he would never forget. To him, “those wedges of tissue-fine typing paper—with blurred carbon print on them, folded and re-folded, rubbed on clothing and smelling of sweat” represented the “lifeline of the dissident movements,” in the same way “as paper is said to be ‘the bread of civilization.’”²⁰⁰ He further described how the circulation of *samizdat* represented a part of its aesthetics: “Passed over at street corners or in back rooms, carried in pockets for weeks on end to keep them from the eyes of the K.G.B., they can soon accumulate into an almost indisposible mountain of paper.”²⁰¹

Astonishingly, from an aesthetic point of view, the work of the forefather of *samizdat*, the Russian poet Nikolai Glazkov, was judged as imitative. Although having produced the first self-published text, his works resembled—it was argued—the official publishing style, since he imitated the style of the state publisher. To some extent, the same can be said about *tamizdat*, as various texts appeared in *tamizdat* only after their official publication in their own countries had ceased. In his 2001 article “The Terrifying Mimicry of *Samizdat*,” the Russian scholar Serguei Oushakine digs into this issue, and partly deconstructs the heroic image of *samizdat*. He insists that *samizdat* was simply an inverted reflection of the same dominant discourse that kept the authorities in power. “The dissidents,” he writes, “chose a strategy of identification with the dominant symbolic regime—a strategy of mimetic reproduction of already existing rhetorical tools.”²⁰² Oushakine argues that *samizdat* created a closed circle of discourse between power and the powerless. Chalidze was already aware in 1973 of the interdependence between *samizdat*, as

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 616.

²⁰⁰ Bonavia, *Fat Sasha and the Urban Guerilla*, 83.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Oushakine, “The Terrifying Mimicry of *Samizdat*,” 199.

a mode of resistance, and the complex system of KGB supervision which required a larger budget to finance the surveillance of the literary underground.²⁰³ Thus, the system of resistance and opposition kept the system of control, censorship, and suppression running. It was not only the lines between official and unofficial literature that became blurred. *Samizdat* literature, with “its moral appealing function and its handing down of an idealized image of the writer,” also turned into as much “an authoritative literature as the socialist realism which it fought.”²⁰⁴ A closer look at the so-called grey zone of these cultural products that existed “on the borders of legality and illegality”²⁰⁵ reveals that “the line between the two cultures or two forms of communication” was not always “sharp and distinct.”²⁰⁶ Even for the authors and readers, it was not easy to identify the boundary between what was allowed and what was forbidden. These difficulties prompted Scammell to encourage the *samizdat* reader not to make a clear distinction between the underground and official literature:

It would be a mistake [...] to deduce some sort of direct confrontation or opposition between writers whose work appears in *samizdat* and those who are officially published. The lines are blurred and indistinct and always changing. [...] It can thus be seen that Soviet literature is again, for the first time since the twenties, in a state of some fluidity.²⁰⁷

Thus, there existed two counteracting tendencies of literary activity: on the one hand, to challenge the state, and, on the other hand, to remain acceptable in the eyes of the official literary elite. The border that separated official and unofficial culture required a continuous balancing act; even today, it is not easily identifiable. In embracing all kinds of literary and artistic works, and mirroring a broad variety of attitudes and ideas, the *samizdat* corpus reflects the diversity and ambiguity of one particular Cold War community: the literary underground. Alexander Gribanov touches upon the impact of the interaction between the two spheres of non-conformist writings:

²⁰³ “Struggling Now for Human Rights,” 243.

²⁰⁴ Kliems, “Der Dissens und seine Literatur,” 242.

²⁰⁵ Skilling, “Independent Communications,” 63.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁰⁷ Scammell, “Introduction,” 1–28.

The interaction between *samizdat* and *tamizdat* created a new and rather serious factor in cultural and political life. I should mention that this factor worked not only on Soviet territory but even more on the territory of other countries in Eastern Europe. This interaction was especially prominent in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.²⁰⁸

Gribanov describes the results of the close relationship between *samizdat* and *tamizdat* as a new “uncontrollable social mechanism.”²⁰⁹ The production and circulation of these two literary forms depended on the personal decisions and relations of individuals, circles, and groups. When an author wrote a piece, it was unforeseeable if it would be read, copied, distributed, circulated, or even debated. Its possible Western arrival was a gamble, as personal connections—and above all financial and ideological factors—decided a work’s appearance or disappearance.

THE *TAMIZDAT* DILEMMA

From the late 1950s onwards, people on both sides of the Iron Curtain increasingly started to pursue the idea of cross-border literary exchanges. However, the strict authority and the meticulous practice of central censorship offices, such as Glavlit in the Soviet Union, controlled all foreign publications and harshly punished authors who circulated their literature without official sanction. Yet, without copyright laws, *samizdat* books and documents, which reached the West in various forms, faced the problem of uncontrollable circulation and publication. Authors who allowed the circulation of *samizdat* books by passing them to friends, without prohibiting them from copying them, knew their books could possibly “get out of Russia and be printed in the West.”²¹⁰

A great number and variety of *tamizdat* initiatives were established across Western Europe, the United States, and Canada, which were run by émigrés or Western publishers with a particular interest in the literature of the ‘Other Europe.’ They were responsible for supporting, collecting, smuggling, or publishing *tamizdat*. Among the most famous

²⁰⁸ Gribanov, “*Samizdat* According to Andropov,” 6.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Van het Reve, “*Samizdat*,” 21.

initiatives was the Dutch Alexander Herzen Foundation. Together with the British historian Peter Reddaway, the Dutch historian Jan Willem Bezemer, Frank Fisher and his wife Elisabeth Fisher-Spanjer, Karel van het Reve set up the foundation in 1969 to organize the publication of Russian non-conformist literature in the West. Reddaway found in van het Reve “one of the very few Russia watchers” who understood “not every citizen of the USSR was a communist.”²¹¹ They wanted to fulfill the wish of such daring authors who contended that “there is nothing in the Soviet laws to prevent them from publishing abroad,” which is why they insisted on “exercising their rights.” The Foundation’s prerogative was to “protect the author’s name against piracy, political exploitation, careless translations, and other complications that have often marked the publication in the West” of manuscripts that were successfully smuggled out of the Soviet Union.²¹² In contrast to many other émigré presses, which published smuggled manuscripts without the authors’ consent, the AHF had the “approval of the authors to act as their agent abroad.”

The English-Russian Ardis Publishers in Ann Arbor, Michigan, founded by Carl and Ellendea Proffer in 1971, also played a central role in disseminating Russian literature.

Though not representing an émigré endeavor, the Proffers dedicated their life to Russian letters. Carl Proffer was remembered by his friends as a “Midwestern basketball player” who ironically found himself in the position of “affecting the cultural life of the Soviet Union.”²¹³ In 1987, Ellendea Proffer further elaborated on Carl Proffer’s paradoxical path towards Russian literature. He was neither of “Slavic background,” nor a “world-traveller”; he was “not interested in languages until the day he happened on the Russian alphabet,” and he did “not have any real curiosity about literature until he was in college.” All of this turned him into “an exotic” in the Russian literary milieu.²¹⁴ Yet people like Nadezhda Mandelstam particularly appreciated the fact, Carl Proffer recalls, that “we were not of Russian descent, but were in love with Russian culture only for its own sake.”²¹⁵ Carl and Ellendea Proffer started Ardis after their visits to the Soviet Union made them aware of

²¹¹ Driessen van het Reve, December 9, 2013.

²¹² Raymont, “New Dutch Group is Publishing Writings,” 25.

²¹³ E. Proffer, “Introduction,” 8.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ C. Proffer, “Nadezhda Mandelstam,” 16.



Figure 6: Photograph of Carl and Ellendea Proffer in Ardis packing room, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1975. Personal archive of Ellendea Proffer Teasley.

Russia's still unexplored literary resources: manuscripts squirreled away in the drawers of authors or their heirs; writings published in the relative freedom of the twenties and later suppressed; works that squeezed past censorship during Russia's post-Stalin seasonal thaws, only to disappear down the memory hole.²¹⁶

A 1976 article in *The New York Times* appreciates the fact that “a vigorous new branch of *samizdat* was established in the basement of” the Proffer’s “rambling mansion in Ann Arbor.”²¹⁷ Ardis’s publications gained a formidable reputation among Russians and Western readers, not only because it published non-conformist authors and reprinted much of the Russian literature that was out of print. It gained particular recognition as it invested much time and effort into translating works of twentieth-century Russian literature. Because of its translations were of such

²¹⁶ Blake, “Samizdat from a Basement in Ann Arbor,” 27.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

high quality, a broad variety of authors, both prose and poetry, could be read in the West.

Khronika Press, a Russian-language publishing house, which was co-founded by Edward Kline in 1973, and named after the Russian journal *The Chronicle of Current Events*, also played a pivotal role in supporting Russian *samizdat* and *tamizdat*. Edward Kline's "address on his business headquarters—303 Eighth Avenue, in the garment district," was known "to all sorts of Soviet citizens who each month sneak out into the mail hundreds of pages of reports and pleas."²¹⁸ The documents and reports he received came in the *samizdat* form of "tightly packed, secretly typed, hungrily smudged onion skin reports, frail as leaves in the wind and just as autumnal in their hope of renewal."²¹⁹ Its most famous publication, as will be later shown, was the *Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*.

Another famous endeavor was the Czechoslovak publishing house Sixty-Eight Publishers which Josef Škvorecký and Zdena Salivarová started in Toronto in 1971 after moving to Canada in 1969.²²⁰ Naming the publishing house in memory of their "country's struggle and their own exile,"²²¹ its primary task was "to sustain Czech literature and redeem it from the political arbiters of culture in Prague, who have banned more than 200 writers."²²² They went straight into real competition with Czechoslovakia's official publishing establishment by releasing books by authors who had either "fled or were banished after the Soviet military intervention in 1968," or who were still living in Czechoslovakia, but "whose manuscripts [had] made their way here."²²³ They were convinced that the way to help Czechoslovak non-conformist writers was "more publicity in the West."²²⁴ They even went so far with publishing so-called anti-state material that they lost their Czechoslovak citizenship.²²⁵ The continuous translation and publishing efforts to support the literary underground inside Czechoslovakia meant that Sixty-Eight

²¹⁸ Clines, "About New York," 19.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ For more information on Sixty-Eight Publishing see Hansen, "All's Well That Ends Well."

²²¹ Goodman, "Life Inspires Czech Emigre's Fiction," C13.

²²² Kaufman, "Books Barred by Prague," 21.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Goodman, "Life Inspires Czech Emigre's Fiction," C13.

²²⁵ Ibid.

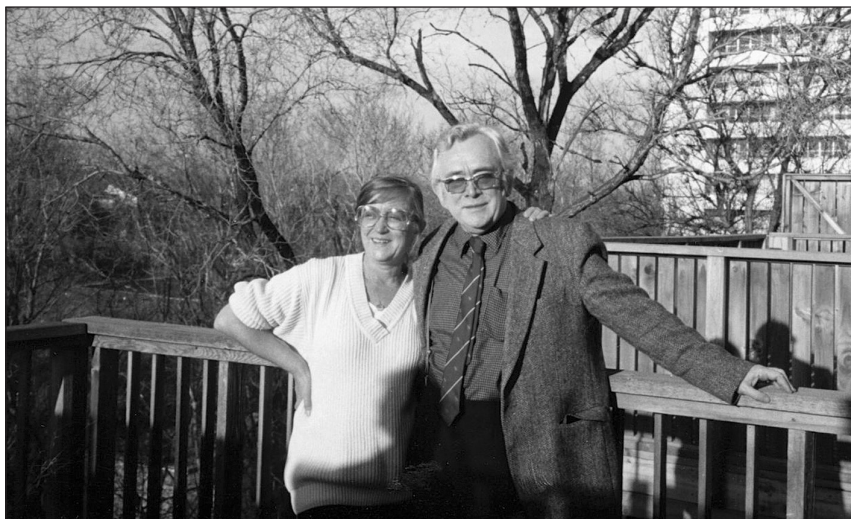


Figure 7: Photograph of Zdena and Josef Škvorecký, Toronto, 1987. Repository of the Československé dokumentační středisko, 1948-1989 [Czechoslovak Documentation Center], Private archive, Vilém Prečan, Prague.



Figure 8: Photograph of Gordon Skilling and Zdena Škvorecká at Sixty-Eight Publishers, Toronto, Christmas 1977. Repository of the Československé dokumentační středisko, 1948-1989 [Czechoslovak Documentation Center], Private archive, Vilém Prečan, Prague.

Publishers was viewed with immense respect both in the West and among writers inside Czechoslovakia. Other initiatives included the Czechoslovak Documentation Center (a repository for Czechoslovak *samizdat*), which Vilém Prečan established in Scheinfeld near Munich; the Palach Press Agency that Jan Kavan started in 1974 in London to support the Czechoslovak opposition; and the Czechoslovak publishing house Index in Cologne, which was run by Adolf Mueller and Bedřich Utitz.²²⁶ All of these initiatives promoted, distributed, or published works from their home countries that would have otherwise been forgotten and banished to the desk drawer.

Many underground writers were unhappy to see their *samizdat* works printed by Western publishers whose political or literary profile they did not favor. They also faced the problem of not receiving royalties from publications that were not bound by copyright laws. Various *samizdat* authors formulated their dissatisfaction with this practice, and called for copyright protection. For this reason, organizations, such as the AHF, declared their aim not only to publish Soviet authors in Russian and other languages, but also to safeguard “their copyright in all countries.”²²⁷ To fulfill this task, they first published the work in Russian to secure copyright, then acted as the writer’s literary agent before attempting to negotiate the foreign language rights with publishers, in order “to retain as much control as possible of the final version.”²²⁸ Elisabeth Fischer was the AHF’s self-appointed literary agent, selling translation rights to “weeklies in Holland, England, Amerika [sic] and Germany.”²²⁹ They collected royalties for reprintings, which they sent to the authors or collected to fund future publications. Sometimes it turned out to be a difficult undertaking to establish copyright, as several manuscripts turned up in various places in the West. Van het Reve was disappointed, as his daughter remembers, that he could not establish the copyright for *Vospominaniya* (*Hope Against Hope*), Nadezhda Mandelstam’s literary memoirs. The AHF, however, won the competition against Pall Mall over *Moi pokazaniia* (*My Testimony*) by Anatoly Marchenko.²³⁰

²²⁶ *Index* (Cologne) should not be confused with *Index on Censorship* (London).

²²⁷ “The Clandestine Chronicle,” 16.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Driessen van het Reve, December 9, 2013.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

By the mid-1970s, severe publishing policies and laws were introduced in most of the state socialist countries to stop the flow of literature. When the cultural authorities realized that their reputation had been severely damaged by Western publications of non-conformist writers, they introduced copyright laws, censorship measures, and increased the punishment of possible deviance.²³¹ The USSR pursued an ambiguous international literary policy. Its accession to the international Universal Copyright Convention (UCC) on May 27, 1973, indicates, on the one hand, that they were willing to mutually acknowledge intellectual property.²³² On the other hand, the UCC allowed "a state publisher to claim the copyright even of a *samizdat* (self-published) work and prohibit publication of any translation of which it disapproved."²³³ If the Soviets could not "prohibit publication of underground works in the West," they would definitely "try to profit from them."²³⁴ In the event that a *samizdat* work reached the West, the Western publisher had to pay hard currency to the Soviet official publishing house for reprinting the work or its translation. The Western publishing scene feared that the signing of the copyright convention meant that only those Russian books could be published abroad which had been approved by the Soviet Union, and only those foreign works could be published in Russia which the authorities approved.²³⁵ To circumvent this regulation, many Western publishers added the note that "[t]his came to us from the Soviet Union without the author's knowledge. We print it without his permission."²³⁶

But even before such laws were introduced, publishing in the West was not always an easy undertaking, and it often triggered heated debates inside the literary underground. The existence of a transnational literary community in the 'Other Europe' did not automatically yield a single, ideologically uniform revaluation of *tamizdat's* social and intellectual power. Publishing without official permission in the West represented not only an illegal act in the eyes of literary officials, but also a political provocation. Officials' often harsh reactions to the active role of non-conformist writers in the Western press reveals that they felt more threatened

²³¹ For an interesting read on the relationship between censorship and literature during the Cold War see Swan, "Politics and the Engaged Imagination."

²³² Pilch, "U.S. Copyright Relations," 334.

²³³ Astrachan, "Soviets Join Copyright System," H1.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Sakharov, "Why I Speak Out Alone," 19.

²³⁶ Parry, "Samizdat is Russia's Underground Press," 249.

by a publication abroad than by one inside their own country. "Konrád's statements abroad to Western newspapers and radio stations," RFE/RL reasoned, and "their subsequent impact" might represent "a greater threat to the regime" than the "small domestic opposition at home with its *samizdat* reviews and various protest actions."²³⁷ For instance, Miklós Haraszti, whose books "had been known in the West (but not published in his own country)," was arrested and accused of "having attempted to pass a copy of his book *Salaire aux Pièces (A Worker in a Worker's State)* abroad."²³⁸ He was charged with "engaging in hostile propaganda against the socialist regime and illegally distributing copies of his manuscript."²³⁹

The official view on *tamizdat* writers such as Konrád, outlined in the Hungarian newspaper *Népszabadság*, was that "the manipulator's main and most urgent worry is to supply Western propaganda centres with some 'tidbit' to prove that socialism is incapable of improving itself."²⁴⁰ The officials feared damage to their reputation by means of unofficial publications abroad, and thus, they employed all possible means to suppress the newly emerging tendencies of literary opposition. Since uncensored literature always questions the status quo, and makes the development of an informed political opinion possible, it is only logical that the state's main aim was the suppression of this independent readership and the maintenance of the party's monopoly on public opinion.

As such, *tamizdat* activity (like *samizdat*) was everywhere "subject to strict controls and severe penalties, including jail and exile."²⁴¹ Authors who published regularly in these mediums knew they would not be published officially and would be barred from official employment.²⁴² As Sinyavsky's case shows, authors who published uncensored articles

²³⁷ "György Konrád, 1969–1984, December 27, 1982; HU OSA 300-40-5: 99/100; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Hungarian Unit, Biographical Files; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

²³⁸ The book was published in English under the title *A Worker in a Worker's State* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977). "Miklós Haraszti, 1964–1990," January 9, 1974. OSA 300-40-5: 61, F 122. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ "György Konrád, 1969–1984," December 27, 1982.

²⁴¹ Skilling, "Samizdat and an Independent Society," 225.

²⁴² Garton Ash, *Uses of Adversity*, 133–34.

abroad were often sentenced to more than five years in prison, treated brutally, or were banned from their country.²⁴³ There was constant persecution of contributors, editors, typists, duplicators, and distributors. But the different implementations of punishments for uncensored writings in the Soviet Bloc was remarkable. They varied in intensity at different periods and in different countries.²⁴⁴ While the punishment of publishers and writers of *tamizdat* was no less severe than of those of *samizdat*, the political and moral significance of the two activities was evaluated differently.

FORM AND CONTENT

The fragmentation of the *samizdat* corpus was also a problem. Scammell refers to the danger of publication in the West: “[m]ajor works of Russian literature were being published (and sometimes written) abroad and the richness of expatriate literary talent established both a split in the Russian literary world and a literary tradition abroad that has remained alive till the present day.”²⁴⁵ Thus, the division of uncensored literature into *samizdat* and *tamizdat* was perceived as contributing to a dangerous factionalism in *samizdat*. By means of publication abroad, the *samizdat* community was believed to have lost a large number of its articles for an Eastern readership.

This fragmentation was also reflected in the material outlook of *samizdat* and *tamizdat*, which often differed heavily. Although the quality and quantity of printing and reproduction equipment increased over time, underground authors mostly kept the improvisational appearance and texture of their *samizdat* literature throughout the entire period of state socialism. For this reason, alternative culture under state socialism is very much associated with the materiality of self-made texts. But when contrasting the aesthetics of the original *samizdat* and its Western

²⁴³ Suppression methods were wide and varied, particularly in the Russian case. In his article entitled “Soviet Psychiatry” the Russian doctor Alexander Podrabinek describes the perverse use of psychiatry for political purposes. Working in a psychiatric hospital, he observed how many healthy persons had “been put in a psychiatric hospital for only expressing [their] opinions, for not agreeing with the social system,” 3.

²⁴⁴ See Skilling, “Independent Communications,” 67.

²⁴⁵ Scammell, “Introduction,” 3.

tamizdat publication, a thorough transformation occurs. As one of *samizdat*'s main aspects was its physical appearance and its uncontrolled distribution, so did the official publication and distribution cause, to some extent, a misrepresentation of the text's origin and materiality.

The conspiratorial practice of its production and circulation was no longer needed once the text had reached the West, where it would pass the official publishing process. Western readers confronted a paratextual apparatus—a shining cover, numbered pages, information on the official publisher, and a foreword—that prepared them for what they could expect in the book. The contrast to the original form of publication mirrors, on the one hand, the first-time official recognition of the *samizdat* text as a publishable work, and, on the other hand, the simultaneous impossibility of ever mediating experiences that were intrinsically bound to the production of a *samizdat* text. (See on this figures 16–19 on pp. 212–215.)

Samizdat's aesthetic character was both the result and the proof of the impossibility of reproducing official publishing methods. While *samizdat* authors crossed the aesthetic boundaries of the professional text when relying on the “pre-Gutenberg” practice of printing,²⁴⁶ the text's original production process could not be captured in official Western journals. When transferred to the Western context, *samizdat* articles often underwent an aesthetic transformation that resulted in different readings of *samizdat* versus *tamizdat*. Thus, in its *tamizdat* wrapping, *samizdat* lost not only its original charm, but its reception also suffered a wholesale alteration; *samizdat* as an aesthetic symbol lost its original meaning.²⁴⁷

Yet, some Western publishers who were, above all, interested in the adequate reflection of the original *samizdat* products in the West, did not alter their aesthetic appearance. Deeply fascinated with the aesthetic texture and condition of *samizdat*, they reprinted the documents in the way they had received them or even tried to recreate the original appearance. For instance the AHF usually used a non-typographical cover for *tamizdat* publications.²⁴⁸ To distinguish their publications they simply added the color red. Peter Reddaway's “little red books,” which were edited and published in Great Britain, were “a bit redder, darker red.”

²⁴⁶ The discussion about the similarities of printing during Gutenberg and in *samizdat* has resulted in a number of publications. See Skilling, “*Samizdat: A Return to the Pre-Gutenberg Era?*” and Komaromi, “*Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon.*”

²⁴⁷ Komaromi, “The Material Existence of Soviet *Samizdat*,” 603.

²⁴⁸ Driessen van het Reve, December 9, 2013.

All the other books of the AHF, which were edited by either Karel van het Reve or his friend Jan Willem Bezemer and published in Belgium at Rosseels, were “of a lighter red.”²⁴⁹ In adding the color, AHF affixed an identifying mark to their publications, meaning that every “taxi driver in Moscow knew of the red Amsterdam booklets.”²⁵⁰ Other Western *tamizdat* publishers, for instance the British organization Amnesty International or the New York Khronika Press, copied the visual appearance of the original journal. In this way, Western publishers hoped to mediate experiences that were intrinsically bound to the production of *samizdat*.²⁵¹

At times, an almost moral difference was established between a publication in the underground at home and an ‘easy’ publication abroad. For those underground writers whose activity was mostly connected to *samizdat*, such a publication was perceived as being more important.²⁵² An underground publication contributed to the moral strengthening of an exceedingly fragmented and individualized group of non-conformist writers, and to the uniting of the opposition in general. While authors always wished the publication of their work, Tamás argues, *samizdat* obviously contained “something more.” *Samizdat* authors wanted “to bear witness, to show that you existed, that was a very important moral factor” in being published. Facing daily intimidations and depression, he wanted “to convince people and also to encourage people.” These publications enjoyed “some kind of moral quality.” He felt that “it was like ‘go to hell’ for risk,” but this was worth it as people “felt that they were not alone in their heretical views.”²⁵³

In the eyes of many underground writers, *tamizdat* rarely reached the moral significance of *samizdat* in regard to the courage and conviction that was required of someone to publish in the literary underground at home. However, intellectuals who were active in the underground but later emigrated to the West estimated the role of the Western publications far more positively. The Polish émigré Eugeniusz Smolar remembers that many publications important to the literary underground were smuggled to Poland from Paris, London, Madrid, Italy, and even the United States.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ For more information on *samizdat*’s materiality see Komaromi, “The Material Existence of Soviet *Samizdat*.”

²⁵² Tamás, interview by the author.

²⁵³ Ibid.

When authors “really wanted to publish something,” they would “rather smuggle it to the West, and get it published there.”²⁵⁴ Miklós Haraszti even argues that these two forms of independent literature were interlinked: without a Western, so-called enlightened notion of global rights, neither *samizdat* nor *tamizdat* could have developed so successfully:

tamizdat is the precondition, without some Western notion, without some global outlook, without some possibility to transgress (as in the '60s Marcuse would have said “transcendence”); even if not believing that in the end it would be a better system, but at least a continuity of the free world, a continuity of free speech, that belief cannot be born without a global precondition which is *tamizdat*, which is support[ed] either [by] nationals abroad—expats—or by wider systems.²⁵⁵

Underground writers considered *tamizdat* highly relevant for its ability to counter the ideology of Cold War isolation and the everyday reality of Europe's division. Alternatively, it reinvented the notion of the inherent boundlessness of ideas and literatures, which only required the help of translation to reach other audiences and readerships. As Tamás puts it: “The writer wants [...] his ideas to be multiplied and disseminated.”²⁵⁶ Although *tamizdat* is sometimes reduced to writers' natural wish to see their work published, the relevance of publishing abroad is not presented only in this very limited frame. Konrád formulates his point of view as follows: “I write what I want. Hungarian literary officials can publish what they want. If, however, I have an opportunity to publish something abroad, I do so. If a writer adjusts himself to such conditions, he will find himself in diametric opposition to the inner ethics of literature.”²⁵⁷

All writers faced exactly this kind of moral dilemma, namely whether to follow the party dictate about what could and could not be published or not.²⁵⁸ And, except for a small minority, most authors tried to compromise in order to have their works published, bargaining for years with the censors about the extent of the censorship forced on their work. The Russian essayist Lev Lifshitz-Losev observes that censorship started far

²⁵⁴ Smolar, “From Memories to Legacies.”

²⁵⁵ Haraszti, “From Memories to Legacies.”

²⁵⁶ Miklós Tamás, interview by the author.

²⁵⁷ “György Konrád, 1969–1984,” December 27, 1982.

²⁵⁸ Skilling, “Independent Communications,” 53.

“earlier than the editor’s office,” that is, with the inner censor, which operates “from the very moment of creation.”²⁵⁹ The hope of publishing their work caused authors to adhere to the official censors’ criteria. This inner censor made them choose certain expressions, leave out particular symbols, or stick to a special literary style.²⁶⁰ But as soon as these external and internal censorship forces tried to ban the expression of thought, counter-movements arose. When it became absolutely impossible to publish anything officially, many authors turned towards unofficial publishing, whether in *samizdat* or *tamizdat*. Their motto became: “If the state won’t publish me, I’ll publish myself.”²⁶¹

SAMIZDAT VERSUS TAMIZDAT

Both alternative publishing forms resulted from increasing censorship inside the Soviet sphere, which forced many authors to look for alternative ways to release their work. The decision about a publication in the underground versus a publication abroad was influenced by considerations of the readership an author was hoping to reach. While *samizdat* was bound to the non-official sphere, and its distribution was therefore limited, publication abroad offered writers the opportunity to address a far larger public and to shape public discourses in the West. Thus, authors had two options. They could decide to reach a broader readership in the West by means of a publication in *tamizdat*, and possibly contribute to a sensitization of Western societies. As Skilling argues, *tamizdat* was “an important source of information [...] about the real conditions within a country,” thus aiding “foreign governments, the media abroad, international organizations, and individual scholars and journalists in their efforts to understand and interpret the society concerned.”²⁶² Or, they could decide to further strengthen the political or cultural opposition inside their own country by circulating their works in *samizdat*.

János Kenedi, who published both in the literary underground and abroad, stresses the importance of “publishing over there” by arguing for the importance of publicity for a writer’s self-esteem. Despite its inherent dangers, publishing abroad offered the *samizdat* writer a “kind of pub-

²⁵⁹ Lifshitz-Losev, “What it Means to Be Censored,” 49.

²⁶⁰ Pospelovsky, “From Gosizdat to *Samizdat* and *Tamizdat*,” 17.

²⁶¹ Reddaway, *Uncensored Russia*, 19.

²⁶² Skilling, “*Samizdat*: A Return to the Pre-Gutenberg Era?” 77.

licity [that] saved their creativity.”²⁶³ When asked about her involvement in establishing contact between the literary underground and the emigration, as well as about personally working as a literary smuggler, Jiřina Šiklová outlined the great moral value that a reconnection to the West offered: “At this time it was normal that we did it, because it was the only possibility to survive [...] and I can tell you that I have seen how much this changed people’s attitude towards their life when we saw that it was possible to publish some books abroad, it was fantastic. As if you had given water to flowers, yes?”²⁶⁴

Besides the importance of publicity for strengthening the literary underground, the move towards a Western publication was often accompanied by the wish to enlighten the West about the real situation inside the Soviet sphere. Adam Michnik formulates this task as follows: “I tried [...] to bear witness to the true situation in the country and to the resistance of the population.”²⁶⁵ Gáspár Miklós Tamás offers a different opinion: “We did not want, first of all, to convince the French public.”²⁶⁶ He argues that the real difficulties were not in the West but at home, and to live with them was the true task of life: “[t]he difficulties were here, our difficulties did not present themselves in the West, it was here.”²⁶⁷ Arthur Miller recounts his astonishment at the wish of non-conformist authors to gain an audience at home:

The oddest request I ever heard in Czechoslovakia—or anywhere else—was to do what I could to help writers publish their works—but not in French, German or English, the normal desire of sequestered writers cut off from the outside. No, these Czech writers were desperate to see their works—in Czech! Somehow this speaks of something far more profound than “dissidence” or any political quantification. There is something like love in it, and in this sense it is a prophetic yearning and demand.²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Kenedi, interview by the author.

²⁶⁴ Šiklová “From Memories to Legacies.

²⁶⁵ “Adam Michnik, 1969–1982,” May 18, 1977. HU OSA 300-50-15: 25; Records of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Polish Unit; Biographical File; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

²⁶⁶ Tamás, interview by the author.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Miller, “The Sin of Power,” 81.

Miller refers here to their great disappointment of never having been “officially” listened to by their countrymen, who were much more important than Western readers. But Miller also lobbied for writers in the West. In a foreword to *Love and Freedom*, Rosemary Kavan’s autobiography, he points to the fact that her personal account will help Western intellectuals understand that “[t]his is not some ‘Eastern’ country with whose unfree habits of life we in the West are unfamiliar—Prague, after all, is farther West than Vienna—it is a nation which had possessed and cherished freedom before being forced to give it up.”²⁶⁹ Underground writers, too, understood the importance of convincing Western left-wing intellectuals of the dangers of Soviet-type communism. Tamás acknowledges his hope at the time to effect political change abroad, as he “very much wanted to persuade, of course.” He wanted, first of all, to inform those “Western leftist audiences,” such as the West German Greens, who were receptive to those “voices coming out from Eastern Europe,” and, secondly, to “challenge their last ties with communism.”²⁷⁰ Tamás was convinced that “East European dissidents really contributed to the Western Left breaking away from their emotional ties with Soviet-style communism.” However, he openly accused Western social democratic parties of having completely failed to support the underground movements in the ‘Other Europe.’ Due to the “heavy disappointment” that proletarian politics were not affirmed by the Western Left, Tamás argues, “all East European dissidents” quickly distanced themselves from the Left. Instead, they shifted to a rather conservative political stance, hoping that closer ties could be established with Western conservative circles that openly expressed their interest in the cause of the opposition movements.²⁷¹

For Tamás, it was not the political stance of the Western intellectuals and media that mattered, but rather the concrete amount of support they offered. His switch between politically opposite camps might be best understood as a reaction to this lack of support from certain political groups in the West. In this context, it is understandable that Tamás suggests, a publication in *samizdat* was far more efficient for spreading non-conformist thinking than *tamizdat*. He supports his argument by saying that a publication in a Western language hardly

²⁶⁹ Miller, “Foreword,” x.

²⁷⁰ Tamás, interview by the author.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

ever found its way back to its country of origin, and that it was unlikely that a book published in French would be smuggled back home.²⁷² He argues that “they did not dare to take French books in, well you know, some Westerners put them into their suitcases because, of course, you know, the worst that could have happened to them was to be chucked out of the country, but Hungarian citizens didn’t dare.”²⁷³ Admitting the importance of the Western public is a delicate issue among former underground writers, as it suggests the East’s one-sided dependence on the West. Only in cases where the West actively recognized the importance of the Eastern experience and its non-conformist literature was *tamizdat*’s value admitted.

At the time, the belief existed that Western media were interested in dissident literature merely from behind the Iron Curtain. The polarization of literature was perceived not only as a strategy of communist literary officials, but also as that of the Western press. Although authors such as Wisława Szymborska saw themselves primarily as poets or literary figures, Western interest in Polish and other non-conformist writing regularly tended to “follow the erratic rhythm of historical disasters and focus [...] on phenomena that bear more or less directly on political events.”²⁷⁴ As Timothy Garton Ash points out, the non-conformist writers from the ‘Other Europe’ expected that in the West they could finally act without being burdened with the moral luggage they carried with them inside the Soviet Union:

The poet wants to remain a poet, not somebody confessing, not a political leader, not an economist and not a counseling office for civil questions. He gained an oversized relevance. It is not astonishing that, due to this pressure, these restrictions, these difficulties and demands, so many brilliant intellectuals from Poland have chosen the way to the West, away from the front, for a (short or long) breath into the European normality (an image into which New York and Chicago fit). Yes, in Poland intellectuals are relevant—perhaps more than any intellectual should ever be.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Anders, “The Revenge of the Mortal Hand.”

²⁷⁵ Garton Ash, “Polnisches Als-ob,” 85. Translation from German by the author.

Although many émigrés were relieved upon their arrival to the West, regaining as they did the ability to write without censorship, some were astonished by the Western perception of émigré literature and the Western media's politicization. Carl Proffer addresses the problem of the West's demeaning approach to émigré literature, which was based on the assumption that émigré literature was "something limited, narrow, parochial, perhaps of interest for a time, but with no hope of entering the permanent culture of a language." Émigré literature was falsely perceived as a "minority literature, a literature of special pleading and like other defensive, minority types of literature [...] the compost heap of culture."²⁷⁶ Only in the 1970s, when a "vast new flow of people and books" arrived in the US and "drawers and archives [were] emptied out" to be printed in the West and "shipped right back to the Soviet Union," did a change in mentality occur.²⁷⁷ It was then that some Western publishers, such as Proffer's Ardis publishing house, realized that "the best part of Soviet Russian literature simply moved abroad for one stage of its existence—the printing stage." This is why Proffer felt that it was a mistake that past generations of literary histories "excluded writers who lived or published abroad."²⁷⁸ He even went further and saw it as his life's task to contribute to an adequate understanding of Russian literature in the West. Yet, he could not do much to fundamentally change the general approach of Western media to "forbidden literature" from "over there."

THE DISTORTION OF WESTERN MEDIA

After having served four years in a prison camp for anti-state agitation for writing, printing and distributing poetry, the Russian poet Irina Ratushinskaya fled to the West in 1986. She had been writing poetry and publishing it secretly in *samizdat*. In an interview with a Western reporter she reflected on the relationship between her role as a woman and her recognition as a writer: "I was not frightened. I was even flattered to get such a long term, which was the first official acknowledgement of my

²⁷⁶ Proffer, "The Remarkable Decade," 126.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 128.

work in the country.”²⁷⁹ Yet, after four years of prison camp, she used the opportunity to escape to the West. When she sat on the plane with Andrew Wilson, a journalist of *The Observer*, as they crossed into Western air space, she acknowledged that what made her survive as a writer was “the necessity to live openly, without fear and without secrets.” Yet, when envisioning her future as a writer in the West, she immediately responded that “I shall see about publishing abroad the 150 poems I composed in prison and have carried in my head.” Convinced that they surely would “want to go back,” they first wanted “to know if the things that matter—freedom to speak, to know the truth” were really available in the West. Wilson remembers stepping out with Ratushinskaya and her husband at a London airport. After having spoken with the *samizdat* author about the expected freedom of media in the West, he recalled walking towards the “massed television cameras at Heathrow,” towards “all the lionization that awaits new arrivals from what the West still calls the Gulag.” Having witnessed the arrival of many uncensored writers in the West, and knowing about the dangers of the Western media system, he hoped that these two writers would not be distorted. Remembering “what has happened to so many before them,” he honestly hoped “that these two brave people” would “remain true to themselves,” and that they would not become just “another pair of pawns in the East-West propaganda war.”²⁸⁰

Milan Kundera, too, expressed his disappointment about the similarity of the approach taken by communist officials and the mainstream Western media towards non-official writings. Similar to György Konrád, who stressed the importance of a writer’s autonomy and rejected the idea of literary dissent,²⁸¹ Kundera also refused to be subsumed under this label:

All my life in Czechoslovakia I fought against literature being reduced to a mere instrument of propaganda. Then I found myself in the West only to discover that here people write about the literature of the so-called East European countries as if it were indeed nothing more than a propaganda instrument, be it pro- or anti-Communism. I must confess I don’t like the word “dissident,” particularly when applied to art. It is

²⁷⁹ Morrison, “Irina: My Flight From Fear,” 9.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Konrád, “The Long Work of Liberty,” 7.

part and parcel of that same politicizing, ideological distortion which cripples a work of art. The novels of Tibor Déry, Miloš Forman's films—are they dissident or aren't they? They cannot be fitted into such a category. If you cannot view the art that comes to you from Prague or Budapest in any other way than by means of this idiotic political code, you murder it no less brutally than the worst of the Stalinist dogmatists. And you are quite unable to hear its true voice.²⁸²

As Robert Porter observes, there existed “a tendency in the less discerning media and in the popular imagination in the West to see no differences between the various ‘dissidents’—a term one dislikes using—since all genuine intellectuals dissent in one way or another.”²⁸³ The discontent expressed herein stems from the relativization of all unofficial literature, independent of its literary merits. Not to conform to the official line of literary writing seems to have been enough to gain fame as an important non-conformist writer in the Western sphere. A fascination with the forbidden surrounded uncensored literature from the Eastern parts of Europe.²⁸⁴ Neither Soviet officials nor Western media seem to have judged the works of dissident writers on the grounds of their literary and aesthetic quality. “We are not talking about whether the verses are good or bad,”²⁸⁵ as Brodsky declared. Dumitru Tsepeneag described the Western attitude as follows: “They are concerned with this literature, which is haunted by sadness and disregards aesthetic criteria. Naturally. Politics above all else!”²⁸⁶ Danilo Kiš even went so far as to conclude that through this politicization only a very limited image of underground liter-

²⁸² Kundera, “Comedy is Everywhere,” 5–6.

²⁸³ Porter, “A Remarkable Memoir,” 75.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Hosking, “Introduction.” Hosking argues that the literary situation in the Soviet Union was not that uncommon, and that it was normal for good literature to be published only with great difficulty. Due to the high degree of tolerance in the West to literature, literary works were no longer taken very seriously. Western fascination with “dissident literature,” which rebelled against the Soviet censor, had to be understood against this backdrop. Hosking states that the unprecedentedly high degree of censorship and the state media monopoly “bestowed on good literature a status and an importance, which it has probably never previously possessed, even in the France of ancien régime,” 2.

²⁸⁵ Brodsky, cited in Scammel, “Interview with Josif Brodsky,” 253.

²⁸⁶ See Tsepeneag, “Editorial,” 1. Translated from French by the author.

ature was presented, which did not do justice to the complexity of literary works and their authors. "If I were to generalize about Central European writers," he wrote, "I would have to say that people see us only as political animals and only in this one dimension. This impoverishes us [...] We are seen as spokesmen of certain dissident trends and we would like to be much more than that."²⁸⁷ Out of this unhappiness with the political use of their works at home and in the Western literary sphere, Vaculík expressed his hopes for a future "[w]hen books will be judged as books and not as pistols: who can handle them and who not [...] when publishing plans will be passed according to traditional literary criteria and by cultural creative people who like to read themselves and who actually look forward to new books."²⁸⁸

These writers hoped that the Western reader would adopt a more sophisticated attitude towards the literature coming from the East, one that was devoid of any type of political instrumentalization, and that this would go hand in hand with a change in the attitude of the non-conformist writers themselves. Ilios Jannakakis, a Greek émigré to Eastern Europe, asked underground writers at home to "free our east-European activities of the smell of something exotic, of some intellectual luxury which one can only afford as long as it is fashionable, and to turn them into a permanent source of reflection about their own [Western] right of existence."²⁸⁹

Only through a simultaneous change by writers and readers could a shift occur. With time, a more diverse interest emerged from the Western media, which no longer focused merely on politically useful literature. Simultaneously, the image of the West and of 'publishing-over-there' changed among underground writers. Václav Havel remarked that "a certain basic sympathy [emerged among the writers] for the moral ethos of those who, living in a mature consumer society, place their concern for the destiny of the world ahead of a mere concern for personal well-being."²⁹⁰ It was especially due to the genesis of the moral appreciation of uncensored writings in the West that the relevance of *tamizdat* was acknowledged. Tamás emphasizes how changing Western public opinion about Eastern Europe and being admired for one's work felt very good.

²⁸⁷ Kiš cited in "The Lisbon Conference," 83.

²⁸⁸ Vaculík, "I Can't Complain," 52.

²⁸⁹ Jannakakis, "Kontinent Podiumsdiskussion," 239. Translation from German by the author.

²⁹⁰ Havel, "An Anatomy of Reticence," 16–17.

He remembers having been amazed that dissidence had become “a moral idea in the West,” which made people say “generous and nice words” about them.²⁹¹

TAMIZDAT AND THE TRANSNATIONAL WOMEN’S MOVEMENT

Friendships and personal encounters that developed across the Iron Curtain played a particularly important role in the physical transmission of literature and ideas. When women in Eastern Europe started to lobby in favor of women’s rights, they expressed a special interest in the ways and means their Western ‘sisters’ had challenged existing gender roles and systems in their own countries. It was not only women in Eastern Europe who faced the challenge of everyday life’s “double burden,” but also their Western counterparts.²⁹² Feminist thinking was in no way merely a Western import;²⁹³ yet, the mutual contact and cross-border influences between women in East and West strengthened women’s agency inside the various East European countries. Various books from inside the Soviet Bloc dealing with gender issues would have never received much publicity had the authors not established contact with Western feminist organizations.

Tatyana Mamonova, one of the editors of the feminist *samizdat* journal *Women and Russia*, remembers her close connection to Western feminists: “Genia Browning, like Barbara Heldt, was one of the first to display an authentic interest in our unofficial women’s movement in the Soviet Union.”²⁹⁴ Out of that interest, Browning invited Mamonova to her private home during Mamonova’s 1981 tour of the United Kingdom, which Mamonova recalls as a “real hot time,” with “one tour after another!” She stayed with Browning’s family at her “lovely house in London” and “spoke in Russian and talked a lot about [her] [...] book *Women and Russia*,” which had just been published in English translation by Sheba Feminist Press.²⁹⁵ Almost simultaneously, between 1980 and

²⁹¹ Tamás, interview by the author.

²⁹² Massino and Penn, “Gender Politics and Everyday Life,” 2.

²⁹³ Ibid., 4.

²⁹⁴ Mamonova, “Women and Politics in the USSR,” 25.

²⁹⁵ *Women and Russia Almanach: First Feminist Samizdat*. London: Sheta Feminist Press, 1980.

1981, translations in French, Swedish, Danish, German, Norwegian, Dutch, and even non-European languages appeared.²⁹⁶ They had an explosive effect.²⁹⁷

Abroad, some of the editors of the almanac started to get involved in publishing *tamizdat*. Juliia Voznesenskaia, for instance, began writing articles about Soviet “social affairs and literary matters” for *Posev* and *Grani*.²⁹⁸ As long as they remained inside the Soviet Union, however, they sought Western support. The active Western advocates of *Women and Russia* wondered in 1980 what they could do to improve the situation of the women authors:

The question for feminists in the West is how we can best support our Soviet sisters. [...] It is difficult to know how best to express our solidarity. [...] The least we can do is seek as much publicity as possible for the Almanac and for the collective of women who produced it.²⁹⁹

Women activists throughout Western Europe and the United States sought this publicity by writing about the political and social situation of women inside the Eastern Bloc in newspapers, journals and books.³⁰⁰ Others, as in the case of the Western publication of *Women and Russia*, physically smuggled materials out and arranged for their publication. A few years after *Women and Russia* appeared, a volume with the title *Moscow Women: Thirteen Interviews* reached the West and was published by the Swedes Carola Hansson and Karin Liden at Pantheon. To avoid “official channels” for this volume, both authors “interviewed women in their homes,” but also “smuggled out the tapes and produced a book.”³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ *Femmes et Russie Almanach*. Paris: Edition Des Femmes, 1980–1981; *Kvinnen og Russland Almanach*. Oslo: Pax Forlag, 1980. *Kvinnan Ryssland Almanac*; Stockholm: Awe Gebers, 1980; *Kvindren og Rusland Almanach*; Copenhagen: Informations Forlag, 1980; *Die Frau und Russland Almanach*. Munich: Fraue-noffensive, 1980; The book also appeared in Austria, Switzerland, Holland, Japan, and Greece.

²⁹⁷ Guppy, “The Women’s Camp,” 35.

²⁹⁸ Curtis, “Juliia Voznesenskaia,” 179.

²⁹⁹ Women and Eastern Europe Group, “Introduction,” 11.

³⁰⁰ Scott, *Women and Socialism*; Jancar, *Women under Communism*; Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*; Holland, ed., *Soviet Sisterhood*; Alpern Engels, “Women in Russia” and Reddaway, “Russia Puts First Feminist on Trial”.

³⁰¹ Winter, “Less Equal than Others,” 41.

This type of work meant that much of the feminist activism that evolved throughout the Eastern Bloc did not remain isolated, but contributed to emerging forms of transnational feminists' literary, political and cultural activism.

At the same time, contact between feminists in the East and the West provoked feelings of confusion, mutual incomprehension and irreconcilable differences. In her autobiographical novel *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, the Croatian novelist Slavenka Drakulić recalls how an encounter with a Western feminist at the 1990 Socialist Scholars Conference in New York, widened the cultural gap between both feminists more than closing it. When approached by a Western feminist through a letter after her return home, Drakulić remembers how deeply astonished she was about an improper question regarding the public role of women in state socialist Yugoslavia. She "couldn't help laughing out loud."³⁰² Although having actually participated in forming the first feminist organization in Yugoslavia, the Western feminist's question made her wonder if the West had understood anything about the role of women in Eastern Europe during the past decades:

Women's influence in the public discourse? For God's sake, what does she mean? There is hardly any public discourse [...]. Women don't have any influence, they barely even have a voice. All media are non-feminist, there are no feminist media. All that we could talk about is the *absence* of influence, of voice, of debate, of a feminist movement.³⁰³

The way the Western scholar formulated her questions on gender in Eastern Europe made Drakulić feel that with each of her statements the United States "receded further and further, almost disappearing" from her horizon.³⁰⁴ She imagined writing a letter back, enlightening her Western 'sister' about the real situation in her country: "No dear B, we don't discuss this matter,' I will answer in my letter. 'It is not a matter of choice, it is simply not a matter at all, see? And I cannot answer your questions, because they are all wrong.'"³⁰⁵ Erroneous questions, misleading interpretations and incorrect conclusions regularly complicated

³⁰² Drakulić, *How We Survived Communism*, 127.

³⁰³ Ibid., 127. Emphasis in the original.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 127–28.

and strained the relationships between Eastern and Western actors. Such forms of miscommunication were not only perceptible in the field of feminism, but in all arenas of cross-border contact.

WESTERN APPEALS AND THE MEDIA

Nevertheless, Western reporting about the concerns of the literary opposition in the 'Other Europe' yielded concrete benefits, as it gave writers visibility in the West and guaranteed them a certain security in their home countries. Adam Michnik formulates it as follows: "I allowed myself to be guided by the conviction that in the West we have an important ally: Public Opinion in these countries."³⁰⁶ Be it through a publication in the West, a written appeal, or a visit, non-conformist writers addressed themselves to the public opinion. As Michael Scammell argues:

One of the bonuses of doing this type of work has been the contact, and in some cases friendship, established with outstanding writers who have been in trouble: Solzhenitsyn, Dìlas, Havel, Barańczak, Soyinka, Galeano, Onetti, and with the many distinguished writers from other parts of the world who have gone out of their way to help: Heinrich Böll, Mario Vargas Llosa, Stephen Spender, Tom Stoppard, Philip Roth [...] There is a kind of global consciousness coming into existence [...] Fewer and fewer are prepared to stand aside and remain silent while their fellows are persecuted.³⁰⁷

Belief in the power of Western public opinion was strong, and motivated many to address their concerns to a Western readership. Publishing in the West represented a step towards rejoining a global intellectual sphere that the Iron Curtain had divided. A remarkable document from *Index on Censorship* from 1975, entitled *The Five Commandments*,³⁰⁸ clearly defines the expectations of underground authors towards the West and especially its intellectuals. The document is an extract from a book entitled *Seven*

³⁰⁶ "Adam Michnik, 1969–1982," May 18, 1977.

³⁰⁷ Scammell, "How *Index on Censorship* Started," 26.

³⁰⁸ Anonymous, "The Five Commandments."

Letters from Prague, whose anonymous Czech author was convinced that the East European regimes were very sensitive to world public opinion. However, only a “well-informed,” “truthful,” “accurate” and “as complete as possible” public opinion was believed to be of any help.³⁰⁹ Posing the question, “What can the intellectuals in the West do for us?” its writers proclaimed five commandments. The first means of breaking the isolation of the intellectuals in the ‘Other Europe’ was via the attempt of Western intellectuals to keep themselves informed about what really was happening inside Czechoslovakia.

1. Try and keep yourself informed about the fate of your friends and colleagues in Czechoslovakia (and the other Socialist countries). Never hesitate to make your voice heard if your colleagues are in immediate danger. [...] There is nothing our regime dislikes quite so much as truthful, detailed, and accurate information about its true nature and activities, about the abnormality of our “normalised” situation.³¹⁰

The commitment to stay in touch with colleagues behind the Iron Curtain, and to show an honest interest in their work and personal lives would facilitate the flow of information.

2. Don’t lose contact with your Czechoslovak colleagues. Your letter, greeting, phone call, or visit [...] your interest, a friendly word, will give him strength and encouragement and above all will help to break the isolation to which the regime has condemned us.³¹¹

The third “commandment” calls upon Western intellectuals to send and smuggle unavailable books and other written material into Czechoslovakia in order to further counteract the intellectual isolation of their colleagues in the East.

3. Access to information, new books, articles, newspapers, journals, and other material has been made extremely difficult.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 17.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

[...] For this reason please don't forget to include our names on any mailing list of your books, articles, offprint, or other publications. [...] For a Western visitor [...] it is not particularly risky to bring with him a new book or some interesting journal, yet each such publication will find a very wide and grateful readership and will help to alleviate our isolation. Not by bread alone.³¹²

Thus, the transfer of literature, through post or smuggling, was highly valued by Czech underground writers, who were eager to read foreign and especially uncensored literature. Part of this eagerness can be explained by their hopes to see their own works published in the West. They therefore, addressed themselves to their Western colleagues in the hope of being invited for scientific meetings and publications.

4. Invite us to conferences, ask us to give lectures, nominate us as members of [...] committees and other international bodies, turn to us for reviews and other contributions to journals, books, questionnaires. Make it possible for us to publish our work, which is being carried on under difficult conditions, in boiler rooms, night watchmen's huts, or at the end of a hard day's physical labor.³¹³

In the fifth "commandment," in which they ask for financial support, the authors make an ironic reference to Vladimir Dudintsev's novel *Not by Bread Alone*, one of the path-breaking works of the thaw, in which he had dared to express the frustration of an engineer over the entrenched Soviet bureaucracy, and for which its author was viciously attacked.

5. Don't forget that not by books alone does an intellectual survive.³¹⁴

This concrete appeal to Western colleagues and world public opinion was believed to be the only way to create a bridge of communication. Often, appeals were passed on to the Western press, as underground writers believed it futile to address their own newspapers.³¹⁵ Sometimes, when

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Litvinov, "Pavel Litvinov and Index on Censorship," 6–7.

Western intellectuals responded immediately to their appeals, underground writers expressed their gratitude. As Pavel Litvinov wrote at the time: "Help and understanding on the part of progressive circles in the West is what we need more than anything else." In particular, international groups that supported democratic processes in the USSR were particularly welcomed.³¹⁶ Apart from supporting and defending those who were undergoing persecution in the Soviet Union, Litvinov stresses the relevance of world public opinion. The committee should "provide information to world public opinion about the real state of affairs in the USSR," and "draw the attention of many existing organizations and movements [...] in the West to the situation in the USSR."³¹⁷

Often, it was due to their belief in the power of a Western audience that writers, disenchanted with their opportunities at home, decided to rely on an audience abroad. The division of authorship into *samizdat* and *tamizdat* writers resulted, above all, from their envisioned readerships, as discussed earlier in relation to the respective mediums' receptions. While *samizdat* authors wrote mostly for a core circle of friends, *tamizdat* authors did not give up on the idea of an international readership.³¹⁸ They were concerned with developments in society at large, and felt compelled to share their ideas in a public, uncensored forum. Often, they were driven to publish abroad by a feeling of urgent necessity to bear witness to the political and cultural situation at home. The struggle for authors' rights was believed to be completely useless without the support of the Western public. Litvinov even addressed the "[w]orld public opinion," which he perceived was an "essential element in the effectiveness of the human rights movement in the USSR."³¹⁹ Together with Andrei Amalrik he made it a custom in 1967 and 1968 to approach Western correspondents in Moscow, which was still "an unheard-of step among dissenters at the time and seemed full of risks and dangers." This method proved to be one of the "most valuable methods of mobilizing public opinion abroad," which is why it became commonplace practice among human rights activists.³²⁰ Addressing themselves directly to Western correspondents or Western newspapers became a medium to apply pressure on the government to either release a certain author or push through some otherwise impossible

³¹⁶ Litvinov, "Pavel Litvinov's letter to Stephen Spender," 9.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Kliems, "Der Dissens und seine Literatur," 243.

³¹⁹ Litvinov, "The Human Rights Movement," 14.

³²⁰ Ibid.

requests. "I cannot over-emphasize to you how crucially important it is to our struggle for human rights to have this active and continuing support from abroad," says Litvinov, "[n]or should it be forgotten that any diminution of interest on the part of public opinion in the West is immediately noted by the Soviet authorities and provides a severe setback to the movement for human rights in its struggle against repression."³²¹

On August 29, 1968, immediately after the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, the famous Russian writer Natalya Gorbanevskaya demonstrated with six other colleagues in Red Square. She immediately sent a letter to major Western newspapers in France, Germany, Italy, and Britain.³²² Starting the letter with "I urge you to print in your newspaper my letter [...] since I am the only participant in this demonstration at present at liberty," Gorbanevskaya describes in detail their peaceful demonstration, in which they had only sat down with banners proclaiming "Long live a free and independent Czechoslovakia!"³²³ She hoped to simultaneously publicize the causes of an occupied Czechoslovakia and her imprisoned colleagues. About the power of public opinion in the West, János Kenedi concluded that "[f]or many dissidents in Hungary and Eastern Europe, publishing in the West meant a kind of protection at home."³²⁴ *Tamizdat*, then, fulfilled a security function by informing the Western public about the real condition of people under state socialist rule. As Gáspár Miklós Tamás formulates it: "Since people knew about you, you were safe."³²⁵

The Hungarian professor Domokos Kosáry outlines this particular function of *tamizdat* literature by demonstrating the contribution of the non-profit publisher Atlantic Research and Publications, located in New Jersey, to the Hungarian publishing scene as follows:³²⁶

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² "Soviet Poet, in Letter Abroad," 8.

³²³ Cited in *ibid.*

³²⁴ Kenedi, interview by the author.

³²⁵ Tamás, interview by the author.

³²⁶ Atlantic Research and Publications was established in 1977 by Béla Kiraly with the City University of New York in the United States of America. Its aim was, and still is, "to publish books in the English and Hungarian languages within the frameworks of the humanities. To further the good name of the Hungarian nation all over the world, by making known its history, culture, society, and economy, the blossoming of its culture." See http://www.atlantikutato.hu/arp_eng_activ1.htm.

No person or institution ever did so much in disseminating such scholarly works of East Central Europeans in English than Atlantic Research and Publications Inc. is doing. That is particularly important, because scholarly publications of East Central European scholars in the West offer a certain protection for them at home. If someone's name becomes known in the West, the authorities are careful not to touch him or her. As a consequence, these scholars are a little freer than others in expression of their views.³²⁷

For Tamás, this meant that immediately after he was threatened with forced emigration, he forwarded this information to *The Times*, whereupon the case was closed by the Hungarian officials: "So I gave it to *The Times* and to the other *Times* and told them that they wanted to expell me; then I never saw them again. You know, that was the end of the story, they did not try to get me out again."³²⁸

However, illegal publication abroad seldom took place without official consequences. Gábor Demszky believed, it was impossible for an author who had been published in the West to be published ever again by any official publishing house in their own country.³²⁹ But, strengthened by the conviction that the Western public was an ally in the fight for civil rights, some authors risked a direct confrontation with Soviet officials. The well-known Russian author Valery Tarsis, for instance, who published abroad under his own name, publicized the KGB's intimidation of him. When he was threatened with a "road accident" he apparently answered that no one would believe the Soviet authorities, even if he was "run over by accident" or a brick fell on his head. Instead, "[a]broad they will still think that the bloodstained secret police killed Tarsis." Therefore he warned the secret police: "not only will you not kill me but you'll even look after me and move heaven and earth to

³²⁷ Domokos Kosáry, cited in ARP: Editorial Documents (correspondence 1984–1985), November 7, 1983. HU OSA 336-0-5: 4, Sheet 3. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. In the same document the opinion of György Litván, a member of the domestic democratic opposition, is expressed, who wanted to publish with ARP "to secure himself that relative security attained by those who are publishing in the West."

³²⁸ Tamás, interview by the author.

³²⁹ "Un éditeur de samizdat," 6.

see that I don't die."³³⁰ By talking to the KGB in this manner—and convinced of the power of world public opinion—Tarsis helped create a new consciousness among disobedient writers. His interviews with Western media outlets persuaded the younger generation of poets to organize readings in Mayakovsky Square, and send their work abroad.³³¹ His courage to publish abroad under his own name, like Alexander Exenin-Volpin, was another step towards the increasingly liberal use of the West to make their works available.

Thus, Western public opinion served as a repository of knowledge about the inhumane behavior of the Soviet state against its disobedient citizens. Since the public opinion of the Western powers played not only an important role in the eyes of the citizen but also in those of the Soviet state, discriminated writers' threats to inform the West or to publish critical writings abroad was a useful means in the power game for their rights. The creation of spheres of public discussion on writers' rights led to the creation of a transnational community in the Eastern Bloc that also involved groups of Western activists. However, this sphere owed its existence mainly to the contribution of émigrés from the 'Other Europe' living in the Western capitals. As will be outlined in the next section, they were often the ones that initiated the cross-border contact.

ÉMIGRÉS BRIDGING EAST AND WEST

The role of émigrés was one, if not *the* most crucial element in the initiation and maintenance of cross-cultural literary entanglements. While the community across the 'Other Europe' was one of discourses and ideas, through the West this virtual community developed into a tangible collective. The long-term presence of émigrés created the foundations for cross-border communication. This type of contact was brought on by the Third Wave of emigration from the 'Other Europe',³³² which played a central role in integrating non-official writers and their works into the Western discursive sphere.³³³ The First Wave began in the late 1900s as a result of the anti-Semitic Tsarist regime's pogroms, while the Second Wave culminated after World War II. The Third Wave started in the

³³⁰ Cited in Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn*, 549.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 550.

³³² See Matich and Heim, eds., *The Third Wave*.

³³³ See Gömöri, "Two Émigré Journals."

late 1950s and reached its peak in the mid-1970s. In contrast to earlier waves of political emigration, the Third Wave resulted largely from the disappointment of the unofficial literary elite in the Soviet Union, who no longer believed in the possibility of official recognition inside the state.

Many Third Wave writers were no longer willing to come to terms with the Soviet regime, and decided not only to publish their writings abroad but also to leave their countries. Émigrés became an important part of the intellectual life in such cities as Paris, London, New York, Munich and Toronto, and they propagated a new approach towards uncensored culture and literature from the 'Other Europe.'³³⁴ Among the Russians who found themselves in the West were Brodsky, Sinyavsky, Solzhenitsyn, Vasily Aksyonov, Georgii Vladimov, Vladimir Voynovich and Aleksandr Zinovyev. While the term Third Wave is especially dedicated to Soviet emigration to Western capitals, the almost parallel emigration of underground writers from Poland and Czechoslovakia after 1968 contributed to the development of a multinational émigré community. Another important wave of emigration took place in the years between 1945 and the end of the 1950s, when émigré authors such as Jerzy Giedroyc and Tibor Méray founded the journals *Kultura* and *Irodalmi Újság*. The emigration from Hungary mainly took place following the revolution of 1956.

During these three decades, a large group of intellectuals emigrated to the West—including *samizdat* authors, publishers, and artists—from all the Central and East European countries, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes under duress.³³⁵ Throughout their stay abroad, émigrés succeeded in establishing contacts between intellectuals from the 'Other Europe' and the Western sphere. They played a crucial role in the development of the literary community from a virtual to a concrete transnational entity. Most of the direct links among the centers of non-conformism were made abroad. During a roundtable discussion in 2006, Šiklová emphatically

³³⁴ On intellectual migration see Herget and Ortseifen, eds., *The Transit of Civilization from Europe to America*, and Bailyn and Fleming, eds., *The Intellectual Migration*.

³³⁵ Among the Central European émigrés that particularly shaped the Western publishing sphere were Jan Kavan (London), Antonín Liehm (Paris), Vilém Prečan (Hannover), Jiří Pelikán (Rome), Josef and Zdena Škvorecký (Toronto), Adolf Müller (Cologne), and Jiří Gruša (Bonn) from Czechoslovakia; Péter Kende, István Kemény, and Ferenc Fejtő (Paris) from Hungary; and Jerzy Giedroyc, Mirosław Chojecki (Paris), Eugeniusz Smolar (London), and Alexander Smolar (Paris) from Poland.

accentuated the absurdity of this undertaking: "It was a paradox that for us it was easier and simpler to be in contact through West Germany than directly through Poland. Or the connection between Bratislava and Budapest was done through Germany, too, or through London."³³⁶ Tamás met Russian dissidents in Paris, and Poles in America.³³⁷ Dimitry Pospelovsky, a former professor of Russian history at the University of Western Ontario, explained the psychological importance of the wave of émigrés as regards underground writers' attraction to *tamizdat*. To know about one's colleagues abroad made "*tamizdat* psychologically infinitely more appealing, trustworthy, and intimate to the remaining writers."³³⁸ Anticipating ideas of a 'Nylon Curtain,' Pospelovsky spoke of a "psychological Iron Curtain" that became more transparent as a result.³³⁹

In Paris, especially, a large group of the 'Other Europe' émigrés shaped the city's cultural life. In their new surroundings, they often continued their literary underground activities, only in public now. In the publication entitled *Paris, "Cultural Capital" of Central Europe?* Antoine Marès gives an inside view of the various intellectual exchanges between France and Central Europe in the interwar period.³⁴⁰ While Paris's artistic relevance in the 1930s stood in the foreground, the city offered a political asylum haven for many non-conformist writers from the 'Other Europe' during the Cold War. But the significance of Paris could not be reduced to its political role. For intellectuals who came from an artistic or a literary background, the city's reputation as an avant-garde capital enhanced its standing. Tamás presents the following image of Paris: "When you go to Paris and you can see that from Roman times there is a continuity [...] And in Paris you see it all. It has been kept in storage for me. It is my past too in a way but there it is available and here it isn't, you know. You don't have a gothic cathedral in Budapest."³⁴¹ Apart from the general image of Paris as the embodiment of historical Europe, biographical elements also play a role here. Tamás explains how his personal friendship with Paul Thibaud, who lived for a long time in Budapest, helped him publish in the journal *Esprit* and introduced

³³⁶ Šiklová, "From Memories to Legacies."

³³⁷ Tamás, interview by the author.

³³⁸ Pospelovsky, "From Gosizdat to *Samizdat* and *Tamizdat*," 52.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Delaperrière and Marès, *Paris, "capitale culturelle" de l'Europe centrale?* Translation from French by the author.

³⁴¹ Tamás, interview by the author.

him to people. The fact that his mother lived in Paris in the '30s turned the city into "an old dream" and made him want "to live in and love Paris."³⁴²

Inspired by this "old dream," immigrants who arrived in Paris began to shape its cultural life in such areas as the theatre, the arts, and literature. The increasing presence of émigrés from Eastern Europe enriched the knowledge of the Western intellectual elite about the life of non-conformist intellectuals inside the Eastern Bloc and in emigration. Through emigration, they became part of the Western discourse. However, as Jiří Gruša points out, those who emigrated followed a Western notion of freedom and expression. Their literature already carried in itself some elements of the Western value system. Gruša writes that "[w]hen we come to consider literature in exile, let us not forget that it was Western (in the meaning of the culture common to us all, thus including the East) men of letters who were godfathers to the ideas which have been driving people from their homelands."³⁴³ In this context, Western did not oppose Eastern, but rather referred to a common European value system. This value system, however, could hardly be propagated inside the Soviet sphere.

Only émigrés who were no longer threatened with persecution had the authority to openly formulate their critical voices about the Soviet regime. Marked by their experiences inside the Soviet empire, émigrés were charged with a threefold legitimacy: 1) they had good knowledge about the intellectual life at home as well as the necessary contacts; 2) they were able to create émigré publicity in the West; and 3) by means of their knowledge of the language and the mentality of the host country, they could communicate input from the 'Other Europe' to the Western public. In addition, they were able to perceive their own country from a healthy distance and critically review the situation. Due to their capacity as cultural mediators in the Western sphere,³⁴⁴ the émigrés could enable a change not only in the attitude of Western intellectuals towards the émigré culture but also towards their own society.

However, it must be pointed out that there were huge differences between the émigrés in terms of their integration, or, better, their ability to foster their own integration. The more assimilated émigrés became

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Gruša, "Ex-Prophets and Storysellers," 224.

³⁴⁴ Donahue, "Viewing the West from the East," 247–48.

in the Western cultural scene and the more advanced their knowledge of Western languages was, the more they were capable of serving as linguistic and cultural translators of their native culture. Translating the original texts into Western languages became a primary task for many if they wanted to attract a wider readership and create a dialogue between authors from both sides of the politically divided literary field. However, emigration carried the risk of adapting too much to Western literary tastes and thus, of becoming alienated from the literary community at home. Some of the émigrés were successful and published excellent translations of *samizdat* writings and other unrecognized literary works from inside the Soviet sphere. As editors, they broke existing language barriers and directed their publishing projects simultaneously towards the émigré community, the Western sphere, and writers at home.³⁴⁵ As a result, a broad variety of both prose and poetry authors could be read in the West. The Czech émigré Jiří Lederer remarked in the introduction to *Forbidden Citizens: The Women of Charter 77* how essential German, French, Italian, English, Swedish, and other translations were for the introduction of Czech writers to a Western public.³⁴⁶ It was the “echo abroad,” and especially “the Czechoslovak exile” community with its journals and well-functioning publishing houses that helped to link the “vast library” of Czech *samizdat* authors to readers in the West, proving to the world its relevance.³⁴⁷ Committed to the idea of reaching a broad, international readership, the editors of many journals invested a great deal of energy into translations.

However, beyond the linguistic translation of their works, émigrés faced the essential difficulty of translating their experiences into the host culture. Following Eva Hoffman’s understanding of “cultural translation” as a process of successful adaptation to an unknown entity of language and culture, I contend that émigrés were required to communicate experiences depicted in the underground literature across languages and cultures.³⁴⁸ Only then could the new literary input from the ‘Other Europe’ be successfully translated into the new environment. Thinking of those Russian émigrés that had successfully integrated into American

³⁴⁵ Trepte, “Switching Languages,” 216.

³⁴⁶ Kanturková, ed., *Verbotene Bürger*.

³⁴⁷ Lederer, “Lob den Frauen,” 14.

³⁴⁸ Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*. This term was originally coined by anthropologists. See Budick and Iser, eds., *The Translatability of Cultures*; Burke, “Lost (and Found) in Translation” and Besemer, *Translating One’s Self*.

society, George F. Kennan argues that “the voice of the Russian-in-exile has been an important, sometimes almost a vital, factor in the struggle for greater liberality in the treatment of Russian cultural activity, and for political liberalization generally, at home. [...] And this Russian cultural activity is the atmosphere the exiles breathe.”³⁴⁹ For this reason, he reminds the Western intellectual elite to appreciate this kind of cultural émigré activity: “The West can see to it that the limited portion of Russian cultural activity—literature, scholarship, journalism—which exists in the Western world, beyond the control of Soviet censors receives encouragement and support, and is not permitted to die from neglect and lack of understanding.”³⁵⁰

Many of the émigrés were convinced of their duty to create a Western audience for their oppressed colleagues at home. Péter Kende, a key person in the Hungarian émigré community in Paris, summarizes his role as follows: “They needed me in Paris as I was the only one [...] among the Hungarian émigrés who could actively communicate with the French intellectuals and who at the same time had close contact to Hungary. Thus I had a mediating function.”³⁵¹ Having been a mediator in the Czech case, Vilém Prečan estimates that “reliable communication” was the basis for the emerging mysterious, complex contact zone between the “spiritual opposition inside the country” and “the political emigration that supported the emerging tendencies of [...] independent culture inside the country.” The exile served the home by providing the world with information about the interior situation, and by breaking “through the information barrier of the regime.” Émigrés supported the “flow of information and ideas from outside,” and “arrange[ed] technical support for inland *samizdat* and other media.”³⁵²

Despite the spiritual connection between the various groups of émigrés, the relationships between them were often marked by intellectual and ideological conflicts over defining and defending the opposite poles of the émigré political spectrum. Just as the Soviet underground did not consist of one united, harmonious circle of friends, the common experience of non-conformism could also not bind all émigrés together into an holistic constellation of emigration. Émigré circles and their jour-

³⁴⁹ Kennan, “Between Earth and Hell.”

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Kende, interview by the author.

³⁵² See Prečan, “Die Jahre des grossen Wunders,” 261–62. Translated from German by the author.

nals were diverse, which resulted in personal and ideological battles. Such conflicts did not only take place inside the Soviet émigré community, but also in most émigré circles.³⁵³

A range of intellectual activities aimed to establish contact between the literary underground at home, the émigré community in exile, and Western intellectuals, including festivals, émigré journals, and book publications in various languages. In particular, émigrés established contacts by means of conferences and academic exchanges. Among such Western events dealing with the 'Other Europe' was Writers in Exile: A Conference of Soviet and East European Dissidents (Boston, 1982).³⁵⁴ Such scientific meetings were often the only means for underground authors to travel to the West. Thus, some intellectuals from the 'Other Europe,' for instance János Kenedi, could travel to Western cities or spend a semester or two at a foreign university. They often supported their émigré friends. When, in 1976, Kenedi was allowed to travel to the West, he used the opportunity to establish contacts to pass on to the opposition movement upon his return to Budapest. Instead of simply 'enjoying' his travels or even staying abroad for good, he decided to be above all loyal to the democratic opposition at home. With this in mind, he mostly established cooperations and looked for political contacts in the West.³⁵⁵ By traveling abroad, Kenedi aimed to reconnect intellectual groups on both sides of the Iron Curtain, which he believed was a central factor in defusing the East-West confrontation.

Other conferences aimed to establish bonds between uncensored writers from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. It was mostly in the context of these conferences—such as the conference entitled 1956 Varsovie-Budapest (1976),³⁵⁶ organized by Hungarian and Polish émigrés,³⁵⁷ or Budapest, Prague, Varsovie: Le Printemps de Prague 15

³⁵³ For the Czechoslovak case see Skilling, "Archive of Freedom," 393.

³⁵⁴ Writers in Exile: A Conference of Soviet and East European Dissidents was held from May 7–8, 1982, at Boston University.

³⁵⁵ Kenedi, interview by the author.

³⁵⁶ Péter Kende perceives this conference as the starting point of the entanglements of Central European dissidents. As Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, and French joined the event, he argues that "this was a really important occasion where for the first time this lobby [to bridge the communication gap between East and West], to which I belonged later, emerged." Kende, interview by the author.

³⁵⁷ The conference was organized by Péter Kende and Krzysztof Pomian.

ans après (1981) organized by Czech émigrés³⁵⁸—that contact between the various opposition movements was forged. Mirosław Chojecki, a Polish émigré in Paris, describes a group composed of individuals who had emigrated from various ‘Other Europe’ countries and who were often engaged in the same causes. He remembers Hungarian colleagues such as Peter Kende, as well as people from Ukraine and Lithuania, with whom they discussed problems and the need to help people inside the ‘Other Europe.’ They thought about ways to “pressure international organizations, national organizations, governments, human rights organizations” and what to “do together for our friends in our countries.” He judged the contacts in exile as “good contacts,” especially as they did not rely on any official structures, but were of a private nature.³⁵⁹

Beyond such very personal encounters, academic colloquiums at institutes such as the École des Hautes Études, where Raymond Aron held a regular working seminar to which he invited Central and Eastern European émigrés, also fostered dialogue between various émigré communities.³⁶⁰ Indeed, émigrés were the main target group of these conferences and workshops. However, it was only through Western scholars’s far-reaching practical and theoretical efforts that these conferences developed into spaces of East-West encounter.

TAMIZDAT ON DISPLAY

One of the greatest public events in the West was the Venetian Biennale del Dissenso, held from November 15–December 15, 1977.³⁶¹ Its main organizer, Ripa di Meana, decided that the 1977 Biennale should be dedicated to the exposition of uncensored art and literature from the ‘Other Europe.’ The organizers hoped to offer Western audiences an unprecedented, inspiring picture of the art and literature from these regions.

³⁵⁸ The conference was organized by Zdeněk Mlynar and Jiří Pelikán.

³⁵⁹ Chojecki, interview by the author.

³⁶⁰ Péter Kende met Alexander Smolar in this seminar. Kende, interview by the author.

³⁶¹ See Sasvári, “Disszidens Biennálé,” Velence, 1977; Valentina Parisi, “Zwischen Unstimmigkeit und Andersdenken. Inoffizielle sowjetische Kunst auf der Biennale di Venezia,” presentation at the International University Bremen, 1977; Colombo, “The Politics of Culture”; Liehm, *L'altra letteratura nell'Europa dell'Est* and *Il cinema nell'Europa dell'Est*; Ripa di Meana, “News from the Biennale.”



Figure 9: Photograph of the exhibition *La Nuova Arte Sovietica: Una prospettiva non ufficiale* (*The New Soviet Art: A Non-Official Perspective*) at the cultural event “Biennale del Dissenso,” Venice, 1977. Venice Biennale. Historical Archive of Contemporary Art, Venice, Italy.

They aimed to create a public forum that would encourage cultural and literary fertilization across the Iron Curtain. But before it even opened, the Biennale aroused a series of scandals that centered not only around the provocative quality of its proposed exhibitions, but also its emergence as a problematic political event. The Soviet Union, in particular, generated widespread public resistance to a Biennale that was devoted to dissident culture from Eastern Europe. Pressure was put on the Italian Foreign Ministry to stop Ripa di Meana from pursuing his plan.³⁶² As a result, the Biennale failed to show much original art and culture from the ‘Other Europe.’ Most of the invited Eastern Bloc artists and writers did

³⁶² Shuster, “Soviet Starts Furor in Italy,” 68.

not receive the needed entry visas on time, and organizers had to manage with émigré works. A 1977 article from the *New York Times* concluded that “failure, or at least tedium, seemed imminent,” and was alarmed that “distributors declined to lend Iron Curtain films,” and that art “was hard to come by.”³⁶³

For instance, Andrei Sakharov’s invitation was “returned to Venice marked ‘person unknown.’”³⁶⁴ But the Biennale not only met with the harsh opposition of Soviet cultural officials. Italian communist intellectuals also expressed their discomfort and even their resentment towards the plan to organize an anti-Soviet Biennale in Italy, worrying about the repercussions for Italian-Soviet relations.³⁶⁵ Although himself a member of the Socialist Party, di Meana wanted to direct attention to the problems of Soviet censorship of art and culture, and to express his solidarity with persecuted intellectuals inside the ‘Other Europe.’ Apart from the financial and visa problems, the atmosphere surrounding the Biennale’s opening was characterized by a “general lack of enthusiasm from all but a handful of organizers.”³⁶⁶

Di Meana wanted this exhibition to provoke, however. The event was arranged to coincide with the final stages of the Belgrade talks, the first follow-up meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in Belgrade in 1977, in order to propose “concrete measures to reduce excessive hardship,” and to improve “relations among human beings—the creators of works of art and their audience—and not States.”³⁶⁷ When it turned out that communist authorities refused to let any Soviet Bloc underground writers attend,³⁶⁸ di Meana flew to Belgrade and symbolically handed over a list of the banned speakers to the Italian delegation.³⁶⁹ Nevertheless, not much changed. In addition to the fact that the “Biennale had to borrow all exhibition materials from the West,”³⁷⁰ only a number of émigrés and Western experts came to represent the uncensored culture from the ‘Other Europe.’ The organizers did succeed, however, in obtaining works of artists and writers that still

³⁶³ Hughes, “Art versus Politics,” 127.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Shuster, “Soviet Starts Furor in Italy,” 68.

³⁶⁶ Lee Selden, “Dissent is Hallmark of Venice Biennale,” C24.

³⁶⁷ Ripa di Meana, “News from the Biennale.”

³⁶⁸ Nichols, “Strike Delays Opening of Venice Biennale,” 10.

³⁶⁹ “Dissens-Biennale trotz Pressionen,” 217.

³⁷⁰ “Redender Fetzen,” 244.



Figure 10: Photographic montage for the cultural event “Biennale del Dissenso,” Venice, 1977. Douglas Davis, *Questions Moscow New York Moscow New York: 1976–1977*. Venice Biennale. Historical Archive of Contemporary Art, Venice, Italy.

“lived in the artistic vacuum of their own country,” whose works were “*déjà* not quite *vu*.”³⁷¹ Among the Biennale organizers was the Czech émigré Antonín Liehm, who later published *Lettre Internationale*. While the GDR was officially not invited to participate, a number of former underground writers (recently expelled to West Germany) were invited to Venice. Wolf Biermann was asked to give a concert, and Rudolf Bahro and Robert Havemann were solicited to be speakers. Even if the Biennale was just a material and intellectual reflection of the cultural underground across the Soviet Bloc, it nevertheless succeeded in integrating East German authors into the canon of non-conformist culture in the ‘Other Europe.’

In the permanent exhibition’s four weeks, there were numerous lectures on non-conformist literature, a book-exposition of émigré literature and *samizdat*, several screenings of films censored inside the Eastern Bloc, exhibitions of uncensored culture, and international symposia dedicated to such questions as “What is literature in the Eastern European

³⁷¹ Hughes, “Art Versus Politics,” 127.

countries?” Many individuals spoke about émigré culture and underground literature inside their home countries. Here, for the first time, Western readers literally came into contact with a large number of émigré authors and artists who openly discussed artistic developments inside the Soviet Bloc. The Biennale offered opportunities to establish tangible contacts between émigré authors, publishers, and a Western audience receptive to these unknown voices. Furthermore, it served as the first major public event in the West by way of which uncensored culture that had originated inside the ‘Other Europe,’ or in exile, could be presented to a broad public. For many writers, it was the only opportunity to escape their isolation and to introduce their literature outside limited émigré audiences or circles of friends. For the first time, their uncensored cultural activity and artistic disobedience was publicly debated and valued. Ivan Sanders, György Konrád’s translator, interpreted the Biennale watershed in the self-perception of uncensored authors from the ‘Other Europe’:

the Biennale was a kind of turning point, because I think that was the first time when he [György Konrád] openly defied the system, saying, “I am not going to play along, I am not going to obey the rules, I am a free man” [...] He very consciously and very publicly dissociated himself [from] the regime. He did not want to be part of the system where you could make those sorts of deals and agreements. No, he made a clear break; he made it clear: “I am on my own.” And there were very few people who were willing to go that far and take that risk.³⁷²

Konrád was among the few intellectuals who were allowed to travel to Venice and give a lecture. Émigrés who served as cultural mediators delivered the main content. Western intellectuals who attended the Biennale encountered forms of art and culture that were unknown to them. As Robert Silvers, editor-in-chief of the *New York Review of Books* argues: “It complicates for us the over-simplified pictures we had in our minds of the dissidents—of themselves, their literature, their problems.”³⁷³ Thus, the Biennale produced a far more varied picture of literature and culture. Nevertheless, the question remains as to what extent the exhibition of

³⁷² Sanders, interview by the author.

³⁷³ Cited in Konrád, “The Long Work of Liberty.”

exiled culture from the 'Other Europe' actually succeeded in creating a dialogue between underground culture from behind the Iron Curtain and its Western counterpart. Still, seeing this exhibition of "underground writing (samizdat) even muter in its dangerous appeal for a freer world" urged various viewers to support the Biennale's "protest against the insanity of politics and suppression of art."³⁷⁴

Almost ten years later, but equally important, was the 48th Congress of PEN International in New York in 1986, which symbolized a moment of successful transnational communication between East European writers, mostly represented by émigrés, and Western writers. Susan Sontag noted that dissent, exile and human rights came to dominate the central themes not only of this particular PEN meeting but of most contemporary international writers' congresses, which she saw as "one example of the enormous impact that the countries in the Soviet camp" had from the 1970s.³⁷⁵ She felt that the writers' meetings proved that a "new sense of cultural relations" had emerged.³⁷⁶

The personal meetings and "informal gatherings" gave this literary event its particular character.³⁷⁷ Samuel G. Freeman remembers the meeting as a "week when Ryszard Kapuściński of Warsaw and Adam Zagajewski of Cracow, who had never met in their native Poland, introduced themselves in New York over some Yugoslav vodka."³⁷⁸ But many invited speakers from Central and Eastern Europe were also missing, as the Soviet Union did not let its eight invited speakers travel to New York.³⁷⁹ Like the Biennale, the congress witnessed an intense intellectual controversy. George P. Shulz, Ronald Reagan's secretary of state, had been invited to open the event. But American participants voiced a loud protest against his participation as an official representative of American literary politics, which many American authors did not agree with, using criticism of the dissidents as a template to voice their own condemnation of United States cultural politics. Such émigrés and underground writers as Vassily Aksyonov, on the other hand, presented themselves as particularly pro-American and agreed with officials. Controversy erupted

³⁷⁴ Hughes, "Art Versus Politics," 127.

³⁷⁵ Sontag, "When Writers Talk Among Themselves," BR1.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Freeman, "Of Plumbing, Parties, and PEN," C26.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ McDowell, "PEN Congress to Open Without Soviet Writers."

over the comparability of censorship systems in Eastern Europe and the United States, such as that found on the panel "Censorship in the USA."

ÉMIGRÉ JOURNALS AND CIRCLES

Besides such forms of cultural festivals and academic conferences, a series of germane émigré journals from the 'Other Europe' were published in their original languages in the West, journals which focused on publishing uncensored writings. Since a major part of the émigrés came from the underground movement, they often played an important role in founding new journals that specialized in underground literature, or they participated in already existing journals.³⁸⁰ Above all, these journals circulated only among certain émigré groups, and were meant to address the analogous community and the literary and political underground inside the Soviet sphere.³⁸¹ The variety of these journals and their editorial policies reveal émigrés' roles in the cultural entanglement between East and West. Important figures that shaped the literary output of the Third Wave included Vladimir Maximov, who emigrated to Paris in 1974, where he established the well-known journal *Kontinent*, and Sinyavsky, who went to Paris in 1973 with his wife and launched the literary journal *Syntaxis*.³⁸²

³⁸⁰ Among the newly established journals of the 1970s and 1980s were the Czech *Listy* by Jiří Pelikán (Rome, 1980) and *Studie* (Rome, date unknown); *Rozmluvy* (London), *Obrys* (Munich), the Polish *Aneks* by Eugeniusz Smolar (London, 1974); the Hungarian *Magyar Füzetek* by Péter Kende and István Kemény (Paris, 1978); the Russian *Syntaxis* by Andrei Sinyavsky (Paris, 1978); and *Lettre Internationale* by Antonin Liehm (Paris, 1984). Earlier examples that emerged shortly after the Second World War or after the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 include the Polish *Kultura* by Jerzy Giedroyc (Paris, 1974); the Russian literary magazine *Grani* (Frankfurt, 1947); the weekly journal *Possev* (Frankfurt, 1947), and *Kontinent* by Vladimir Maximov (1974); the Czech *Svědectví: čtvrtletník pro politiku a kulturu* by Pavel Tigrid (Paris, 1956), and *Promeny* (Basel, 1964) by Ladislav Radimsky; and the Hungarian *Irodalmi Újság* (London/Paris, 1957) and *Új Latóhatár* (Munich, 1958).

³⁸¹ Among the publishing houses were YMCA Press (Paris, Russian/French, 1921), the Possev Publishing House (Frankfurt, Russian, 1945), the Chekhov Publishing House (New York, Russian, 1951), Inter-Language Literary Associates (Washington, English, 1964), L'Age d'Homme (Geneva, French, 1966) and the Alexander Herzen Foundation (Amsterdam, Russian, 1969).

³⁸² Solzhenitsyn emigrated in the same year and was one of the founding members of *Kontinent*.

Many of the émigré publishing activities were not just time-intensive but also cost-intensive. Well-known journals with a focus on dissonant voices such as the periodicals *Encounter* or *Preuves* discussed in Chapter 1, received CIA funding, but small-scale émigré journals, too, were dependent on regular financial support. As the CIA and its Congress for Cultural Freedom were among the only financial sources for the advancement of independent culture in the ‘Other Europe,’ some small-scale journals used agency money. Even journals with radically different political stances shared the same funding sources. János Kenedi titles this form of transaction an “opposition business” that resulted in journals vaunting their dissident writers and credentials in order to receive CIA funding.³⁸³

In order to receive this funding, publishers had to prove that the political situation of an opposition movement in a particular country was fraught, and required the moral support of émigré journals. The Hungarian *samizdat* publication *Magyar Füzetek*, Kenedi argues, would have never received CIA funding, had it not been able to prove the existence of an opposition movement in the Central European countries buoyed by Western émigrés.³⁸⁴ Kenedi does not moralize over the legitimacy of CIA support; he simply wants to draw attention to the fact that this support did not always prove that an opposition movement was indeed in danger. There were qualitative differences between the various *samizdat* movements inside the Soviet sphere that were sometimes downplayed. Comparing the quality of the national *samizdat* cultures, Kenedi concludes that Hungarian *samizdat* was far weaker than its East German, Polish, and Czechoslovak counterparts. The movement “needed certain lies in order raise the relevance of [Hungarian] *samizdat* to the level of other *samizdat* movements”—lies that Kenedi hated.³⁸⁵

The size and significance of the Hungarian *samizdat* movement was overemphasized not only to acquire CIA funding, but also in general: “being a dissident or in the opposition was a kind of business, not because they received money, but because they always had to make it clear that the level of the Hungarian *samizdat* was just as high as in the other countries, and it was not like that. The quality, or level was actually much lower.”³⁸⁶ Kenedi recognizes that in contrast to the Hungarian case, CIA funding for Polish publications guaranteed that “[t]heir living,

³⁸³ Kenedi, interview by the author.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

their lives were safe.” In the case of the Soviet Union, CIA support was even more meaningful as it “meant that Medvedev was not sent to the Gulag.” Not wanting to downplay the importance of Hungarian *samizdat*, Kenedi states that “it was important, very important, at that time. And most likely the *samizdat* would not have been kept alive without the financial support of the CIA.” Nor does Kenedi dismiss the financing of other journals and publishing projects such as the Palach Press. He stresses that “this type of publicity saved their creativity.” Although communist police “tried hard to stop the clandestine communication between the ‘Other Europe’ and the West,” it never really succeeded.³⁸⁷

One such example of cross-border communication is the Russian-language journal *Syntaxis*. When Andrei Sinyavsky emigrated with his wife to France in 1973, he used his previous experience in publishing his own works in *tamizdat* to publish other writers whose manuscripts were sent to him illegally. “We started *Syntaxis* out of an extreme sense of loneliness,” he said. “But soon we discovered that we were not alone after all. There were others who started sending us their articles from the Soviet Union.”³⁸⁸ Many writers who had published in the West through *tamizdat* became émigré publishers and continued to distribute their friends’ literature. Sinyavsky’s Parisian periodical was meant to commemorate Alexander Ginzburg’s Soviet *samizdat* journal of the same name. In an interview with Olga Carlisle in the *New York Review of Books*, Sinyavsky speaks with great enthusiasm about his newborn literary child. He aimed not only to take a stance against censorship in the Soviet Union, but also to step up against restrictions on the Parisian émigré press:

The idea of creating a journal came to us because we sensed that there are invisible but strict limitations imposed on what can be published in the Russian émigré press. We are told that we mustn’t wash our dirty linen in public. [...] We are against any form of censorship and we decided, my wife and I, to create a journal which would explore the most unpopular subjects, as the Western press does every day as a matter of fact. We want to create a Russian journal which would be up to Western standards of outspokenness.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Sinyavsky and Carlisle, “Solzhenitsyn and Russian Nationalism.”

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

Kontinent was another Russian émigré journal. The journal's six editors floated the initial idea publication at a press conference held by the Springer-Ullstein publishing house; they wanted to give their colleagues at home a means to "reach the public—a means denied to them in their home countries."³⁹⁰ They argued that the experience of suffering under socialism not only influenced independent thinkers and writers in a single state socialist country, but also left traces on entire Eastern European intellectual communities. *Kontinent's* editors broadcast a firm stance against the Soviet treatment of critical books as criminal acts:

Here the book becomes a work of conviction, a proof of culpability, a criminal soul which gives substance to punishment. It is for a book that you have been exiled like Iossif [Josef] Brodsky, for a book that you had to serve years in the camps like Andrei Sinyavsky, for a book that you have been confined in a mad house like Mikhail Naritsa.³⁹¹

In their journal's pages, they wanted to collect "the united creative forces of European writers and thinkers" in order to create "a union and cooperation of the anti-totalitarian forces of East Europe in their dialogue with the West."³⁹² Publishing the journal in multiple languages helped achieve this aim and broaden the readership. Thus, apart from its Russian and German editions, *Kontinent* appeared in eight languages including English, Italian, French, Dutch, Greek, and Spanish.³⁹³

The Hungarian émigré journal *Magyar Füzetek* provides a telling insight into the importance of émigrés' journals in the entanglement of 'Other Europe' intellectual communities. Péter Kende measures the contributions of Hungarian and other Central European intellectuals to the journal in very positive terms: it "was not just symbolic, because they

³⁹⁰ The press conference was most probably organized by the Axel Springer Publishing House and/or the Ullstein Publishing House, as the document refers to their interest in starting the journal *Kontinent* under their own roof. See FSO Bremen, Historical Archive, F83.2.2 (George Bailey Collection), "Kontinent Misc. Notes," Sheet 1.

³⁹¹ See "Continent. Déclaration de la redaction," in FSO Bremen, Historical Archive, F83.2.2 (George Bailey Collection), "Kontinent Business affairs," Sheet 1–3, Sheet 2.

³⁹² Ibid, Sheet 1–2.

³⁹³ The English edition was named *Kontinent: The Alternative Voice of Russia and Eastern Europe* and first appeared in 1976.

could often travel to the West and we could meet and work together. It was a real cooperation, not just a symbolic contact.”³⁹⁴ Founding *Magyar Füzetek* guaranteed “intense contacts to the Polish emigration” and made him well-informed about Hungarian intellectual life. Seeing the young opposition develop in Hungary in the middle of the 1970s, he felt that they needed, on the one hand, a means of attaining greater visibility in the Hungarian émigré public. On the other hand, he hoped the journal would “unite the Czech, the Poles, and others.” He consolidated his contacts with the young Hungarian opposition, with such figures as “János Kenedi, János Kis, György Bence, Tamás.”³⁹⁵ By means of the Hungarian translation of Czech and Polish texts, *Magyar Füzetek* informed the Hungarian émigré community about the developments in further opposition movements. On the other hand, other émigré journals, such as the Polish *Kultura*, translated many articles from Russia and Hungary in order to inform the Polish emigration about opposition activities elsewhere. In this way, émigré journals from various ‘Other Europe’ countries inspired each other and exchanged common interests.

Beside the exchange of literature between various émigré journals and the transfer of *samizdat* out of the Soviet sphere, *tamizdat* works were transferred back into the Soviet Bloc. Edward Kline remembers how this circulation of literature functioned: “Writers like Mandelstam were originally published in Russia, then they weren’t published for a long time. Then they were published in the West, by German or American publishers in Russia and taken back.”³⁹⁶ Due to the difficulties of obtaining critical books, a black market developed quickly throughout the entire Soviet sphere, which had to satisfy an increasing demand. Books published in the West saturated the market of readers who were willing to pay unreasonable prices for censored books. In the case of *Doctor Zhivago*, for instance, the text was first smuggled to the West, published and reproduced there, and finally smuggled back into its country of origin.

Apart from enabling contacts between different national underground movements, the East European Cultural Foundation (EECF), a group of émigrés from the ‘Other Europe,’ increased the translation of

³⁹⁴ Kende, interview by the author.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Kline, interview by the author.

relevant literary works into other Central and East European languages. Its mission statement from 1982 reads as follows:

Recently, requests have been received from Poland and Czechoslovakia to set up in the West a forum which would enable the vital debate of the seventies, the debate about the possibilities to enlarge the freedom of the individual and of societies in Eastern Europe not only to continue but also to be internationalized. The EECF with its proposal not only to publish books in their original Czech, Slovak, Polish, or Hungarian but also to translate them into each other's languages is attempting to respond to this new need.³⁹⁷

The efficiency of such transfers by underground authors and émigrés differed heavily. Some *samizdat* authors estimated the role of emigration as marginal. Tamás, for instance, who remained in Hungary, thought it dangerous to overemphasize the importance of Western contacts and publications abroad for the underground readership inside the country. Aside from the personal estrangement between émigrés and underground writers, the publication of literature in many forms—*samizdat*, émigré journals—only contributed to its dispersion and to the loss of certain pieces for certain audiences. Many of the articles could only be integrated into the Western, émigré sphere or in the underground at home. Tamás believed that the distribution of *samizdat* was mostly limited to the home country, and as such the Western public was excluded from discourses that took place there. In reverse, the relevance of literature published in the West was rather small for the readership in Central Europe. Only rarely did a work published in the West find its way back to the 'Other Europe.' In the case of Hungary, Tamás strongly argued that they were "only meant for the émigrés" and never reached the Hungarian public "because they were confiscated at the border."³⁹⁸ In the Russian case, however, some sources document that "sizeable parts of each edition of *Kontinent* [were] clandestinely distributed within the Soviet

³⁹⁷ East European Cultural Foundation/EECF—Being registered as a charity under UK law, written by Eugeniusz Smolar, Jan Kavan, Pierre Kende. Josef Škvorecký Papers, 1973–1989 Correspondence with Kavan, 1982, Box 42, Folder 4. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

³⁹⁸ Tamás, interview by the author.

Union.”³⁹⁹ While “one copy of *Kontinent* is read by an average of 8-10 people in the free world, behind the Iron Curtain each copy reaches up to 50 readers.”⁴⁰⁰ Due to the very different nature of the political systems in the Soviet Union and Hungary, the need for uncensored information in both countries also differed extensively. While a Western copy of the *Chronicle of Current Events*, which was printed in the West and smuggled back into the Soviet Union, provided most basic information on the imprisonment of a father, husband, or close colleague, a Hungarian *samizdat* document communicated intellectual developments or cultural debates.

In 1978, the Polish émigré Stefan Kiselewski contrasted the importance of uncensored literature inside Poland with literature in exile. “[It’s] far worse with the books,” he said, “in Poland we passionately grasp for any book, which reaches us through some kind of miracle from the world of the free market; the few issues of *Kultura* or *Historische Hefte* are well thumbed, go from hand to hand. Here I am surrounded by hundreds and thousands of books [...] I cannot read here!”⁴⁰¹ While the circulation of issues of *Kultura* inside Poland resembled a literary miracle, the complete freedom in the West to write, publish, and read without any restriction resulted in a form of literary apathy. The loss of secrecy and conspiracy, which surrounded uncensored literature inside the Soviet sphere, affected the writers’ engagement to fight for their rights. The freedom of press and expression in exile caused Kiselewski to lose interest in reports about Poland. Western freedom had deprived literature of its moral and political power. “Honestly, it is quite a strange situation,” he said. “Here one can write, but it is difficult to find readers, and the Polish problems are hardly understood.” The irony, Kiselewski noted, is poignant. “There, one has a crowd of readers waiting who understand everything, but you are not allowed to write or to publish, and the printings [from here] don’t reach Poland. Here, every detail is described in the press and exists for eternity; there, millions of people live without the press.”⁴⁰²

³⁹⁹ “Konzept Russischer Ausgabe Teil 1,” “Kontinent,” *Kontinent* 14.3, Hausmitteilung-Aktennotiz, Sheet 1–5, Sheet 4. Axel Springer Corporate Records (ASCA), Berlin: “Kontinent”-collection.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Kiselewski, “Auf dieser Seite,” 7. Translation from German by the author.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

In Paris in 1969, the anonymous Czech writer Pavel X described the strange feeling he had when he turned, as he did every morning, to the Czech pages in the Western press. "It was all there," he said of reading about the Czechoslovak crisis, "written down without censorship, without restriction, with no one looking over the writer's shoulder. Yet the writers understood nothing, knew nothing. Why? Because nothing seemed certain, none of this news seemed completely and absolutely credible. Are the journalists here too free, perhaps?" Freedom of expression, he concluded, "does not have the same meaning here as there."⁴⁰³ Like Kiselewski, Pavel X asked whether too much freedom could indeed counteract the written word's power of expression. Without entering into the debate here about the relation between freedom of expression and its moral implications, these individual experiences reveal something about the moral authority of the *samizdat* sphere.

Similar to the controversies over the relevance of émigré publications and the Western media, ideological and political confrontations sometimes took place among the different émigré groups. One well-known example is the dispute between Sinyavsky and Maximov. Sinyavsky, who was originally part of the editorial board of *Kontinent*, clashed with Maximov because he felt that some things should be put differently or not mentioned at all in the journal. He quit and soon afterwards started *Syntaxis*. In a 1978 article in *Encounter*, he explains that *Syntaxis* had "a different spirit and profile, with no aim other than open-mindedness" and was autonomous from *Kontinent*, its "elder brother," since he did "not feel free enough in that circle of free men."⁴⁰⁴ Lack of cooperation between the underground and émigrés was another problem. Kende argues that the Hungarian intellectual elite did not rise to the occasion, as "I originally expected. I thought that it would be a real dialogue between East and West. I mean that it would be a dialogue of the people at home and those that had emigrated to the West but still belonged to the same group of people."⁴⁰⁵

Thus, their cultural activities in exile faced difficulties inherent in émigré activity: first, estrangement between émigrés and people at home; second, rivalries between various émigré groups; third, émigrés having limited impact on shaping Western opinion due to language

⁴⁰³ Pavel X, "From Prague to Paris," 4.

⁴⁰⁴ Sinyavsky, "Émigré," 79.

⁴⁰⁵ Péter Kende, interview by Kozák Gyula, Budapest, September 5–20, 1987, Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, 465.

difficulties; and fourth, the danger of not being able to create an intellectual exchange of ideas between Eastern and Western intellectuals. Nevertheless, émigrés and travelers to the West were the key figures that kept contacts alive between the opposition movement inside the country and the émigré communities in the West. Shaped by their experience of the daily realities of communism, the émigrés' appearance in the Western cultural sphere fostered the newly emerging interest of Western societies in the unknown East. However, émigrés' efforts would not have had such an impact if there had not existed a historical relationship between the 'Other Europe' and Western publishers already. As will be shown in the next section, it was especially in New York that publishers, writers, and cultural activists were closely connected to those regions behind the Iron Curtain.

NEW YORK INTELLECTUALS AND THE 'OTHER EUROPE'

Apart from Paris, with its great variety of cultural and literary émigrés from the 'Other Europe,' New York became one of the core centers of intellectuals and activists concerned about writers inside the Soviet sphere. The motivations of American, and especially New York, intellectuals to become involved in 'Other Europe' literature were manifold. This interest had been developing for several decades. Barbara Epstein, who founded the *New York Review of Books* (NYRB) with Robert Silvers, said that "[t]here were these people, particularly in New York," from universities, institutions, and human rights organizations, who "were part of a special atmosphere of interest in Central Europe, these were places of great poems, great literatures from there [sic]."⁴⁰⁶

"These people" meant a group of high profile intellectuals, including publishers, artists, playwrights, authors, and human rights activists who signed NYRB appeals, organized human rights initiatives, and served on editorial committees of journals that supported 'Other Europe' writers. Among the key figures of this intellectual community were publishers such as Barbara and Jason Epstein, writers such as Philip Roth and Arthur Miller, and human rights activists such as Jeri Laber and Robert

⁴⁰⁶ Epstein, interview by the author.

Bernstein.⁴⁰⁷ In a similar manner to the Czechoslovakian writers' community, which was "literally one friend to another friend, to another friend," the community of intellectuals, writers, and human rights activists in New York formed a network of friends and colleagues.⁴⁰⁸

Nevertheless, the group of New York intellectuals cannot be perceived as an isolated intellectual entity. They were intimately connected with many circles, in particular, to other editors and journals, at times serving as role models. For instance, close contacts existed between the *New York Review of Books* and the French *Lettre Internationale*. For *Lettre*, the *NYRB* served as a philosophical model that established a line of continuity and helped establish further cooperation.⁴⁰⁹ The German historian Jörg Requate terms such literary links between journals of different national origins "transnational communication structures."⁴¹⁰ While intellectual journals emerged from very different national and cultural backgrounds, such communication structures and personal links often had a major impact on the thematic orientation of journals, in particular regarding the focus on literature from the 'Other Europe.' In the very beginning, however, editors and publishers often decided individually to deal with Eastern European literature. While interest in the 'Other Europe' was frequently interpreted as a fashionable trend resulting from the 'cultural Cold War,' interviews with the people involved present a different picture. They show that the original drive to publish underground writers, to visit certain countries in the Soviet orbit, or to establish contacts with a specific person 'over there' was originally often an individual decision. Yet, at the same time, it seems to have represented a vogue among Western publishers, writers, and other intellectuals.

⁴⁰⁷ Among the activists were Robert Bernstein (President of Random House), William Jovanovich (Chairman of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), Winthrop Knowlton (President of Harper and Row), Ashbel Green (Alfred Knopf), Edward Kline (Khronika Press), Robert Silvers, Barbara Epstein, and Jason Epstein (*NYRB*); the writers Arthur Miller, John Updike, Allen Ginsberg, Edward Albee, Kurt Vonnegut, Susan Sontag, Tom Stoppard, and Tony Judt, as well as the human rights activists Areyh Neier, Jeri Laber, Barbara Sproul, Robert L. Bernstein, Philip Roth, Jason and Barbara Epstein, Arthur Miller, John Updike, William and Wendy Luers, Jonathan Brent, and Elie Wiesel.

⁴⁰⁸ Luers, interview by the author.

⁴⁰⁹ "A nos lecteurs," 94.

⁴¹⁰ In German this is referred to as "transnationale Kommunikationsstrukturen." See Requate and Schulze Wessel, "Europäische Öffentlichkeit," 14.

As editor of the *NYRB*, Barbara Epstein was responsible for many of the Russian and Czech publications they published. Underground literature from the region had reached her in New York and inspired her as a publisher, kindling her interest to travel and to meet the writers in person. Epstein traveled relatively late to Czechoslovakia, a country which she had always wanted to visit and whose underground literature had fascinated her for years. After having read and published the works of Havel, and especially his “amazing, moving novel” *Moc bezmocných* (*Power of the Powerless*), which she had received from a Czech friend, she finally went to Prague in the 1980s. She remembers her visit to Prague as an “absolutely amazing experience.”⁴¹¹ Traveling as a “housewife” during her first trip to Prague, Epstein did not manage to visit Havel, who was imprisoned. Epstein used the role of a housewife because she traveled as a private person, not as an editor of the *NYRB*. To visit Havel in prison would have necessitated stepping out of this role to take on a political function. As they had been publishing a lot of political articles about Solidarity, she felt that seeing somebody from the *NYRB* was the last thing Havel needed. Instead, she met a number of dissidents, which was “an extremely powerful experience.” She explains in great detail how moved she was by the writers’ openness and their “eagerness to talk because” she “represented the outside world.”⁴¹²

In this interview with Epstein, something of an altered East-West relationship can be detected. While the writers inside the Soviet Bloc were longing for the literary rights that existed in the free parts of Europe, a new awareness developed among the Western intellectual elite about the model function of the literary underground. The political pressure under which intellectuals in the ‘Other Europe’ were working generated an enormous momentum of literary creativity, something that Epstein tried to capture during her visits to Central Europe. It troubled her that “these wonderful writers [...] were deprived of any outlet,” and that they found themselves in “a horrifying situation” as they were “so isolated.” But because of this, they produced “pieces of tremendous interest.”⁴¹³

This interest very easily turned into a strong impulse to immerse themselves in the region’s literature. Apart from more general descrip-

⁴¹¹ Epstein, interview by the author.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

tions about her own involvement with Central Europe, there was one moment when Epstein immersed herself in her memories of that time. In her personal memories “Prague was so beautiful and so sorrowful,” because even if it was a major city, it was “just totally dark and the streets were empty” when she went outside at nine or ten o’clock in the evening. She felt that “there was something very tragic, but [...] very beautiful about it.” Prague’s tragic appearance was “some part of [the] attraction” which made her “more intense about it.” In this scenic memory of Prague Epstein reimagines the empty streets that echo with melancholy, images that left a deep impression on her and reveal that it was exactly this aspect of Prague that impacted her emotionally. Out of this phenomenological experience, she became more involved in “publishing Havel and keeping track [...] of what was happening to these people.”⁴¹⁴

Similar to Barbara Epstein’s fascination with Václav Havel’s work, Philip Roth was drawn to authors from the widely forgotten regions of Europe. In his article “How I Discovered the Other Europe,” he describes the *NYRB*’s contribution to his individual discovery of ‘Other European’ literature.⁴¹⁵ Plunging into the publications at college, “I found myself drawn to its steady stream of articles by Eastern European dissidents and émigrés.” He admired “these latter-day intellectual opponents of Communism, whose lives and work bent against its political

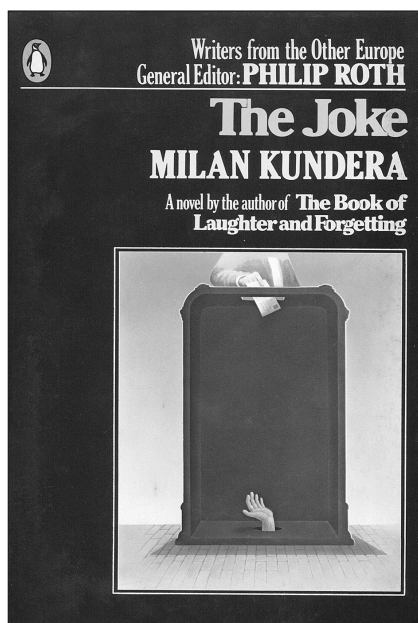


Figure 11: Example of a book published in the Writers from The Other Europe Series. Cover of Milan Kundera, *The Joke*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Roth, “Comment j’ai découvert l’autre Europe.” Translation from French by author.

totalitarianism and against the moral corruption of the societies it had created.”⁴¹⁶ Between 1971 and 1976 Roth regularly traveled to Prague to meet underground writers. In 1974 he initiated the Penguin book series entitled *Writers from the Other Europe*, which became well-known in the United States. The series introduced American audiences to authors from behind the Iron Curtain, such as Milan Kundera, Ivan Klíma, Danilo Kiš, Bohumil Hrabal, György Konrád, and Bruno Schulz, who were extremely well received by the American readership.

Many intellectuals referred to the series as their main means of gaining access to a broad variety of unknown writers from those parts of Europe. In an interview with *The Guardian* in 1994, Roth formulates his perception of non-conformist writers:

They made me very conscious of the difference between the private ludicracy of being a writer in America and the harsh ludicrousness of being a writer in Eastern Europe. These men and women were drowning in history. They were working under tremendous pressure and the pressure was new to me—and news to me, too. They were suffering for what I did freely and I felt great affection for them, and allegiance; we were all members of the same guild.⁴¹⁷

For Roth, being “members of the same guild” created a sense of connectedness. Nevertheless, intellectuals like Roth were prompted to rethink the moral roles allocated within this literary society. In view of the inhumane conditions under which underground literature emerged, Roth felt his own literature to be largely insignificant. Likewise, he rejected the utilization of *tamizdat* for mere political purposes in the frame of the “cultural contest between the capitalist democracies and the Communist states.”⁴¹⁸ Instead, he focused his attention on the literary quality of the publication to prevent the dangers of generalization.

⁴¹⁶ Dorman, *Arguing the World*, 4.

⁴¹⁷ Alvarez, “The Long Road Home.”

⁴¹⁸ Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 3.

IN SEARCH OF LITERARY INSPIRATION

One of the central figures to publicize literature from the Soviet Union in the Western world was Robert Bernstein, former publisher at Random House, founder of Human Rights Watch, and vice-chair of the Association of American Publishers' International Freedom to Publish Committee. Bernstein dedicated his life to giving voice to the voiceless by publishing banned books, in particular, Andrei Sakharov and other Russian writers. He recalls the emotions that propelled him into this endeavor, describing how "I did things by impulse, by instinct, by feel. It became my feeling that we should do this and that we should publish all writers that could not get published in their own country, that it would just be a good thing for Random House to be, whether we made money or not."⁴¹⁹

His involvement with Soviet underground writers was based on a personal encounter with a leading Soviet human rights activist. Bernstein explains his official involvement with Russian publishing matters in an evocative way. During a trip to the Soviet Union in May 1973, he and his colleagues succeeded in convincing the Soviet Union to join the international copyright convention. In the following years, Bernstein was offered many Soviet books that he did not feel inclined to publish. He remembers that "in my mind I could publish a garden book or a chess book or a cookbook," but no books that had been submitted to the censors. Instead, Bernstein sought contact with less conformist Soviet writers. On a trip in the mid-1970s, Bernstein finally found the writer he wanted to publish: Andrei Sakharov.⁴²⁰ He talks at length about this encounter with Sakharov and the life-long impression it left on him:

And on the first day that I met Sakharov I had already published some of his speeches [...] but I said to Sakharov 'The book I really want to publish is your autobiography.' And, we were just having a conversation at a dinner party with the *New York Times* correspondents David Schippler and Christopher Ran who had made a dinner party. We were only talking at a dinner party. And he said, "I would like you to publish it." And

⁴¹⁹ Bernstein, interview by the author.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

I said, "Well, I don't want to lose this opportunity. How can I get you a contract?" He said "We will make a contract right now." I said, "How will we do that?" "Now we have a contract. You fill in the details."⁴²¹

Recalling his encounter with Sakharov, Bernstein immediately switches to reported speech, foregrounding an excitement that endures until this day. What resulted from this meeting was, preeminently, a new awareness of his responsibilities as the publisher of an underground writer. As the book that he was going to publish was neither a gardening book nor a cookbook, but Sakharov's most personal account, Bernstein was concerned about "writing Andrei Sakharov a fair contract, you know with all this responsibility."⁴²²

This sense of personal responsibility was far more important to Bernstein than his immediate official disqualification as a publisher in the Soviet Union and his new status as a *persona non grata*. Soviet officials' reactions only increased his excitement: "So I became even more interested in publishing dissident writers, you know, it was becoming a battle between us, somehow."⁴²³ Speaking about Sakharov's stories, Bernstein concludes that "I thought these were all very dramatic stories and I still think that the press did not pick up enough on these stories [...] I believe the most important thing in my life" is that "you have got to get this out where people can see it and feel it and hear it."⁴²⁴ Here, we see again how the symbol of the public sphere surfaces as a mode through which literature is exposed to a public readership.

Some publishers' remarks give the impression that the Western publication of non-conformist literature from the 'Other Europe' filled gaps in Western literary production. Ashbel Green, the vice president and senior editor of Alfred A. Knopf, argues that a Russian writer in American exile would probably realize after a few months that "the American literary tradition, as distinguished as it is, is not the same class as the Russian. The major literary figures in nineteenth-century American fiction simply are on a different level from Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Chekhov, not to ignore such writers as Pushkin,

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

Lermontov, and Gogol.”⁴²⁵ Although this remark is overtly patriotic and biased, knowledge of the Russian literary traditions and the search for new literary influences from detached parts of Europe were central in encouraging Western editors to publish *tamizdat* authors.

The battle for writers’ rights marked not only Bernstein’s activity, but also the value system of the entire circle of New York intellectuals. As Jason Epstein asks, “Why should these people in New York especially and in Michigan, where the press was, why should they not have been sympathetic to *samizdat*?”⁴²⁶ His *Book Business* (2001) wished to correct the suspicion of some readers who discerned “an implicit ideological bias on the part of *The New York Review*.”⁴²⁷ He argues that “the Review has always been skeptical of doctrine,”⁴²⁸ but that it was never indifferent to values. Some of those values, which were neither ideological nor “elements of a political or ideological program,” were simply the fundamental and “implicit basis of [their] friendship”:⁴²⁹

We valued literature, the other arts, and science as the greatest human achievements. We believed that good writers could make almost any subject interesting and intelligible and bore the obligation to do so within their powers; that official points of view and government activities should be viewed skeptically, and that human rights abuses whether inflicted by Communists, fascists, religious fanatics, or ourselves should be exposed. We opposed the Soviet Union as well as the war in Vietnam.⁴³⁰

Despite their skepticism about political doctrines, one of their core values was to expose human rights abuses inflicted by communists. Sharing common goals played a central role not only in the establishment of the journal’s editorial board, but also for the entire group of intellectuals involved. A specific understanding of the role of culture and the arts in society bound together thinkers, publishers, writers and human rights activists. They felt that political questions should not be seen as separate entities, but should rather be considered in the context of all the other

⁴²⁵ Green, “Book Publishing and the Émigré Writer.”

⁴²⁶ Epstein, interview by the author.

⁴²⁷ Epstein, *Book Business*, 118.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

aspects that shape a culture. Robert Silvers explains that in any genuine intellectual project that deals with such fundamental questions as dictatorships and human rights, an author has to manage simultaneously with the particular culture, literature, mentality, *and* history of a place. Only a combination of these aspects can provide the basis for any genuine intellectual project.⁴³¹ Indeed, only through an in-depth awareness of culture as an intertwined, social phenomenon can one make a real contribution.

This argument represents a long debate in the circle of New York intellectuals who discussed the possible negative consequences of the political dependence or independence of a piece of art. The question of whether “poetry should be analyzed as a reflective social document” or appreciated “as a self-referential work of Art” formed the crux of the debate.⁴³² The *NYRB* editors saw the main aim of their journal not in simply commenting on artistic pieces but rather to “contextualize them, to place them within an historical tradition.”⁴³³ Herein, the *NYRB* followed the Marxist theory of literature according to which “literature can only be properly understood within a larger framework of social reality.”⁴³⁴ The journal was accused of taking a moralizing stand towards literature; nevertheless, the attitude of the editors of the *NYRB* was to a high degree shared by many other New York intellectuals.

The writer Edward Albee argues that the artist’s commitment should never be limited to the national culture of one’s own country, but should always consider the state of culture in the world. He considers an artist’s moral obligation to be artistic solidarity, something that shaped his own activism: “We have responsibilities to make our opinions known on all matters affecting the health of the creative arts. It is our responsibility to do it. So I have a thing at PEN [...] you want me to sign something, I will sign it.”⁴³⁵ Although rejecting the idea of the political use of arts as exercised by the Soviet regime, Albee argues for the inherent political message of any work. Placing himself in the Marxist tradition of

⁴³¹ Silvers, interview by the author.

⁴³² Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 213.

⁴³³ Fender, “The New York Review of Books,” 191.

⁴³⁴ Jefferson and Robey, *Modern Literary Theory*, 167.

⁴³⁵ Albee, “Interview with Edward Albee,” *Havel at Columbia Interviews*. The *Havel at Columbia* site is produced by the Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning in partnership with the Columbia University Arts Initiative. Online at: <http://havel.columbia.edu/> (last accessed July 2, 2012).

culture, he believes that only the left-wing circle of intellectuals shared this understanding of culture:

I know a lot of writers and painters and sculptors and composers in this country and in other countries as well. I could list of the hundreds that I know, if I really tried hard I might possibly find three or four, who were politically right wing and did not understand the responsibility of arts for its own survival and for the survival of a culture to deal heavily in activism because the death of the arts is totalitarianism of course. So it is very hard to find any writers or anybody in the arts to talk about who is not liberal and not a political activist, directly or indirectly.⁴³⁶

Albee acknowledges that this political message imprinted all of his work: “all of my plays are politically activist, some noticeably more than others [...] all of my plays concern themselves with doing liberal arts fully.”⁴³⁷ About the use of the liberal arts, Albee asks whether we are “participating as much as we should, in aspects of all of our lives? Are we socially active, politically active, psychologically alert? And those are activisms. Because democracy is going under if people don’t participate with their own lives.”⁴³⁸ In this comment, Albee pointedly expresses the American understanding of liberal culture as furthering democratic participation and institutional structures.

Only seldom did intellectuals present a direct link between this understanding of art and culture and an engagement in the cause of oppressed writers from the ‘Other Europe.’ Jonathan Brent, publisher of the American journal *Formations*, which introduced *tamizdat* to a North American readership in the 1960s, addressed himself to former *samizdat* authors during a roundtable discussion in 2006. The connection he formulates between the American understanding of liberal culture and his fascination with underground literature at that time is revealing:

I could hate the Soviet Union but of course it wasn’t like your hatred of the Soviet Union—but I saw it *with* your hatred, I saw it *with* your friendships. I read *Index on Censorship* carefully and

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

really what I came away with and what I remember today are largely the anecdotes, the human stories of the prisoners in the Czech and Polish prisons, who would describe what was going on there. *Samizdat* was a vital element of the continuing of liberal culture, it seems to me, in the West.⁴³⁹

These stories articulate a world of experiences previously out of reach for the Western reader. As life and survival under socialism represented a central experience in twentieth-century Europe, *samizdat* and *tamizdat*—its literary modalities—took on an important mediating role. The most useful *tamizdat* pieces for this purpose were those that focused on the literary exploration of daily life under communism. To Western publishers and editors, the personal anecdotes, stories of life in the GULag, autobiographical notes, and diaries of these authors represented valuable resources. Without these exceptional personal stories, Western audiences would have lacked knowledge about an essential part of European culture: the lived experience of socialism. The personal anecdotes, as Brent argues, allowed the Western reader to emotionally share the experiences of living under dictatorship.

These stories were then all the more dangerous in the eye of the censor. In a 1985 talk on the integrity of writers, Per Wästberg points at the particular power of artistic stories, stating that “[t]he censors fear the artist because he does not express in mathematical, logical or political terms what he really means. He tells stories instead, writes poems and recites them [...], so that suddenly people behave in unexpected ways.”⁴⁴⁰ Stories become stubborn and uncontrollable. Fiction acts as “friction against the hard edge of the universe,” revealing that reality during socialism was “manifold and complex” and must be appropriately represented. As authors produce “metaphors, images, loaded with hidden intentions,” they could seldom be pinned down to their innermost motivation.⁴⁴¹ Here, the censors became seriously worried, as they would not be able to foresee the consequences of an imagined literary world.

⁴³⁹ Brent, “From Memories to Legacies.”

⁴⁴⁰ Per Wästberg, “On the Writer and His Integrity,” HU OSA 318-0-6. Sheet 14–26, Sheet 16. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), 1968–2007, Project Files, Cultural Forum Budapest General 1985. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

Solzhenitsyn's outstanding literary works played a particularly important role, as John Updike stresses: "A writer's witness, surely, is of value in its circumstantiality. Solzhenitsyn's visible and brave defiance of the Soviet state is magnificent." But beyond this, he notes, "a novel like *The First Circle* [...] affords us entry into an unknown world, it offers a complex and only implicitly indignant portrait of how human beings live under a certain sort of political system."⁴⁴² Going beyond patriotic righteousness, it communicates the conviction that important conclusions could be drawn from life under socialism. To Brent, "the freedom" that the non-conformist writers and human rights activists in the Soviet Bloc fought for "was not something in and of itself a good—freedom for its own sake." It was rather "freedom in the service of knowledge." And what he discovered when "reading their works" and "thinking about the literature that was produced in this part of the world" was that "knowledge was something you always had to fight for. Knowledge was never given." This was the core of "what this movement proved"—not just to him but to humankind in general.⁴⁴³ The experiences of the daily fight for literary freedom in the 'Other Europe' opened up a new perspective on literature's possible functions in both dictatorial and democratic societies.

This approach was promoted by journals such as the *NYRB*. By presenting such uncensored and provocative thinking, it opened up "new opportunities for civic engagement (at least in written form, if not in practical political action)," which fulfilled a specific pedagogical function in trying to stabilize and protect democracy and civic culture.⁴⁴⁴ In presenting topics of societal importance, such as the political and cultural situation in the Soviet Bloc, the *NYRB* sensitized and broadened Western liberal culture to consider politically delicate topics.

FROM THE SHOAH TO THE GULAG

The special interest of a large body of New York intellectuals in events taking place behind the Iron Curtain needs to be understood in the context of the historic relationship between New York and the 'Other Europe,' as well as its impact on individual biographies. It is striking that

⁴⁴² Updike, "Why Write," 45–48.

⁴⁴³ Brent, "From Memories to Legacies."

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

its key figures descended from second or third generation Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe in the 1910s and 1920s.⁴⁴⁵ Jason Epstein explicitly makes this connection: “It was politically correct certainly to take those positions. The writers were interesting in many cases. It was the right thing to do. [...] One wanted those people to have an audience, and the Russians to get out of Eastern Europe. They were part of the complex.”⁴⁴⁶ New York intellectuals—especially publishers and human rights activists—viewed their engagement with East European writers as an ideal way to do something meaningful. Helping these writers get published granted the work of the Western intellectuals a cachet it would have otherwise lacked.

Beyond this, the repression non-conformist authors expressed in their literature were often familiar to New York intellectuals. Their own family histories during the Nazi period or the Second World War made them very receptive to these stories. “Emigration from the ‘East’ of Europe to the ‘West,’” as Roswitha Breckner argues, often created a “discontinuity of the different life-spheres and life-periods.”⁴⁴⁷ The construction of biographical continuity is often based on people’s wish to normalize this disjunction.⁴⁴⁸ Against this backdrop, New York Jewish intellectuals’ support in exporting texts from behind the Iron Curtain can be understood as a biographical means to normalize forms of discontinuity in their own biographies.

Jason Epstein interprets the engagement of the younger generation of New York intellectuals as a continuation of the older generation’s activism. The latter left its mark on the public debates of the post-World War II period through their well-known journal, the *Partisan Review*:

The children of émigrés went through the public universities here. Some of them were very gifted, bright. And they introduced sophisticated European cultures to which we did not have access before they came along. We started to read Kafka, Freud. This would have not been fashionable if not through

⁴⁴⁵ See Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, 1.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Breckner, Kalekin-Fishman, and Miethe, eds., *Biographies and the Division of Europe*, 204.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 205.

them. They had mostly been associated with *Partisan Review*. [...] That generation died out and has not been replaced.⁴⁴⁹

In the postwar years, the majority of these intellectuals made their careers as cultural critics, writers, or publishers. As such, they had an important impact on the decision-making processes of publishing houses and journals, as well as on public cultural life. Since publishers were key intermediaries between writers and readers, these intellectuals were in a powerful position. As “gatekeepers of ideas” to the intellectual community, they made decisions about “what to let in and what to keep out.”⁴⁵⁰ They shaped the relationship between ideas and the public, and created channels for the flow of ideas.⁴⁵¹ In this function, they also forged the outlook of publishing houses and journals, and dictated intellectual debates.⁴⁵² As these institutions “represent the public opinion of American intellectuals,”⁴⁵³ the intellectuals who molded publishing policies were indispensable intermediaries in the diffusion of ideas, and especially of a new understanding of an ‘Other European’ literature.

The influence of journals like *Partisan Review* lay in their ability to shape “the critique in the United States of Soviet communism”⁴⁵⁴ and influence the polemical factions that formed “over various Cold War issues.”⁴⁵⁵ As the *Partisan Review* “broke with communism and commenced its critique of Stalinism, a courageous heresy at the time,” it set off a broad discussion amongst American intellectuals, which later continued in the pages of the *NYRB*.⁴⁵⁶ While the *Partisan Review* was the forum for discussions in the immediate post-World War II period, the *NYRB* served many Jewish intellectuals from the 1960s with a platform for dialogue and exchange with writers and thinkers from the forgotten parts of Europe.

In a 2005 interview, Robert Bernstein located the origins of his publishing career in his own family history:

⁴⁴⁹ Epstein, interview by the author.

⁴⁵⁰ Coser, Kadushin and Powell, *Books*, 4.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Kadushin, Hover and Tichy, “How and Where to Find Intellectual Elite in the United States,” 2.

⁴⁵³ Coser, Kadushin, and Powell, *Books*, 3; Kadushin, Hover, and Tichy, “How and Where to Find Intellectual Elite,” 17.

⁴⁵⁴ Epstein, *Book Business*, 112.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 112–13.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 116.

And to know what motivated me to do that I really would need a psychiatrist. [...] I just did it, you know, but my grandfather had been very active in bringing Jews out of Germany in the 1930s and I had grown up with this. My grandfather did not have any money. [...] And he said when the people arrived here: "I can't support you. I signed to support you but I can't do it. I don't have money. But I thought I had to get you out. But the one thing I can do is I want to make sure you have a good meal every day. So if you call at my house by 3 o'clock you are welcome for dinner." So I grew up all my life with my grandparents and the refugees and it occurred to me, later on in life, that this may have put something in me.⁴⁵⁷

Bernstein's emerging interest in underground authors is interwoven with the story of his grandfather's support for Jewish refugees. His grandfather's remark that "I thought I had to get you out" developed into a moral maxim that Bernstein further pursued by bringing underground books out of the Soviet Union. His grandfather's stories imprinted his interest in persecuted writers. Other writers, such as the Czech-American Jewish writer Helen Epstein, retrospectively emphasize their individual searches for their pasts. Epstein explicitly searched for her mother in books about Central Europe. "I browsed through books about death, books about Central Europe, books about women, books about Jews," she remembers. "I was mourning my mother and if you had asked me what I was looking for in that enormous tomb of books, I would have said that I was looking for her."⁴⁵⁸ Books and other literary products from the region became physical pieces of memory, offering insights into the forgotten and lost remnants of family histories.

Also earlier activities of the *NYRB*'s publisher, Barbara Epstein reveal some of the biographical roots of her intellectual itinerary. Before publishing Central Europeans, Epstein promoted and edited the 1952 United States publication of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Apart from the editorial work, Epstein established close contact with Frank's father. The book's introduction, which was partly written by Epstein, reads as follows:

⁴⁵⁷ Bernstein, interview by the author.

⁴⁵⁸ H. Epstein, *Where She Came From*, 15.

Anne Frank's account of the changes wrought upon eight people hiding out from the Nazis for two years during the occupation of Holland, living in constant fear and isolation, imprisoned not only by the terrible outward circumstances of war but inwardly by themselves, made me intimately and shockingly aware of war's greatest evil—the degradation of the human spirit. At the same time, Anne's diary makes poignantly clear the ultimate shining nobility of that spirit.⁴⁵⁹

Epstein's involvement with bringing Frank's story to an American audience in order to prevent it from being forgotten resembles her later engagement with Central European authors. Both activities are biographical cornerstones. Epstein's intense connection to the Anne Frank story and, later, to those of other suppressed authors, was fuelled by the same motive to protect writers from oblivion.⁴⁶⁰

Robert Silvers is also conscious of the linkages between his emerging interest in writers from the 'Other Europe' and his own personal background. He explains that the combination of his Eastern European roots in Russia, the Czech Republic, and Romania, and the University of Chicago's special interest in Eastern Europe sparked his attention. The presence of refugee teachers from Germany and Eastern Europe in 1945, the year Silvers enrolled at the university, created a special awareness of the question of the future of Eastern Europe vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.⁴⁶¹ The refugee teachers succeeded in mediating their 'Other Europe' to their students. In addition, since his own family had emigrated two generations earlier from the same region, Silvers was very receptive to these narratives. However, in contrast to people such as Roth and Epstein who personally traveled to the places of their ancestors, Silvers's interest in the political and literary developments of the 'Other Europe' was, above all, based on an intellectual encounter with its writers.

One of the figures who retained recent memories of the native country was the Jewish playwright Tom Stoppard. Born Tomas Straussler in Czechoslovakia in 1937, he fled the Nazis and grew up in India. Although he lived in London, he was an important part of the circle of writers of

⁴⁵⁹ Knapp Sawyer, "Barbara Epstein."

⁴⁶⁰ For further reading on the American connection to the Anne Frank story see Graver, *An Obsession with Anne Frank*.

⁴⁶¹ Silvers, interview by the author.

the *NYRB* and retained close connections with New York intellectuals together with Timothy Garton Ash. His personal life story affected the way he dealt with writers from Czechoslovakia. Stoppard identified with Václav Havel in manifold ways: "If I had not left the country [Czechoslovakia], my life would likely be like his, alternating between prison and menial work."⁴⁶² Conscious of having grown up in a free country, Stoppard's life was marked by acts that expressed his solidarity with those who were born behind the Iron Curtain. Personal encounters with Soviet dissidents who had been imprisoned in psychiatric facilities, such as Victor Fainberg, in 1976, pushed him to treat their experiences in a literary form. His political play *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977) is dedicated to the destiny of Fainberg and Vladimir Bukovsky. In it, Stoppard denounces the inhuman Soviet practice of confining political and literary dissidents to mental hospitals.⁴⁶³ He also wrote letters of protest to foreign governments and published appeals in Western newspapers. Most importantly, his work as a writer was influenced by his experiences traveling to Czechoslovakia and his encounters with Václav Havel, as outlined at the beginning of Chapter 2. Stoppard even dedicated *Professional Foul*, in which he introduces his understanding of suppression and censorship behind the Iron Curtain,⁴⁶⁴ and which aired on television in 1977, to Havel. He wrote an introduction to Havel's 1980 play *Memorandum*, which reads as follows: "If, as nowadays, one might easily suppose the proper study of Literary Man is the intersection of a writer's work and his experience, what a gift that statement seems to offer: here is a play about words, infallibility, logic, and the system."⁴⁶⁵ Stoppard's personal experiences in Prague laid the basis for his plays and for other forms of writing about the situation in Czechoslovakia.

Stoppard's *NYRB* writings on the situation in Prague meant that he became the publication's quintessential intellectual.⁴⁶⁶ His and Havel's articles were important means for the *NYRB* to document the political and literary developments inside Czechoslovakia.⁴⁶⁷ Shortly after *Charter 77* was published, Robert Silvers called Stoppard and asked him if he

⁴⁶² Nadel, *Double Act*, 287.

⁴⁶³ Tom Stoppard, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*. The piece was staged in London before being published.

⁴⁶⁴ Gussow, *Conversations with Stoppard*, 34.

⁴⁶⁵ Stoppard, "Introduction," vii.

⁴⁶⁶ Stoppard, "Prague: The Story of the Chartists."

⁴⁶⁷ Silvers, interview by the author.

was interested in going to Prague to look into the movement. Stoppard replied that he had been waiting for the call for fifteen years, and within a few days traveled to Prague. That Stoppard had waited so long for this call to act shows how he had been seeking to reconnect with his Czechoslovak origins.

In a characteristic fashion, the *NYRB* succeeded in finding the ideal candidate. This was not only in Tom Stoppard's case. The journal was always on the lookout for essayists who could combine an involved personal perspective with critical assessment. Timothy Garton Ash and Tom Stoppard were their main writers reporting on developments inside the 'Other Europe.' In addition to his family roots inside the region, Garton Ash explains the close relationship between his interest in the Nazi period and his commitment to write on Central and European issues:

I studied the history of the Third Reich. I went to Berlin, still divided Berlin, to write a doctorate about Berlin and the Nazis and the question that interested me was: what do people do about a dictatorship? What is it that makes one person a collaborator, another a resister? And what I discovered was that that was quite difficult to find out from the archives, many of which were still closed. But people were *living* those dilemmas in East Germany at that time, so I started writing about communist East Germany and thence about Eastern Europe. So I came to communist Europe through history and through Germany, not through political science and the Soviet Union, as many people did.⁴⁶⁸

From this personal interest, Garton Ash began to examine the close linkages and continuities between the two definitive dictatorships of the twentieth century: one of his first articles in the *NYRB* was entitled "From World War to Cold War" (1987).⁴⁶⁹

Even more personally involved in creating a concrete link between memories of both dictatorial experiences was the Romanian Jewish writer Elie Wiesel, who survived deportation to Auschwitz, emigrated to the United States in the early 1960s, and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.⁴⁷⁰ His protests against the suppression of Jewish writers

⁴⁶⁸ Garton Ash, Interview conducted by Harry Kreisler.

⁴⁶⁹ Garton Ash, "From World War to Cold War."

⁴⁷⁰ An interesting study on the interconnectedness of the two totalitarian regimes is Whitfield, "The Imagination of Disaster."

in the Soviet Union served as an effective intellectual strategy for integrating knowledge about anti-Semitism in both dictatorial periods into a common European memory:

Without trying to compare different periods or regimes—one has no right to compare anything to Auschwitz—I want to tell about a struggle for freedom that still is going on in our world today, mainly in the Soviet Union. I cannot write a mediation on freedom without referring to it.⁴⁷¹

His extensive efforts to campaign for basic freedoms for (especially Jewish) intellectuals became a major concern in his life: “For the Soviet Jews, writing, translating, reading, and studying are free and liberating acts” that integrate them “into an ancient collective experience and memory.”⁴⁷² Wiesel’s works became very popular amongst this Jewish community.

At a meeting of Jewish intellectuals during a visit to the Soviet Union in 1986, Wiesel was approached by a young *samizdat* writer who translated Wiesel’s first three books into *samizdat* and presented Wiesel with the first copy, because “I knew I would meet you someday.”⁴⁷³ Here, we see a reversal of the biographical infiltration of the *samizdat* and *tamizdat* spheres. Wiesel’s American work circulated so successfully in Jewish *samizdat* because it not only told a story about Jewish suffering during the Holocaust, but it was also simultaneously read as a symbol of Jewish suffering and social marginalization during communism. Wiesel’s travel experiences in the Soviet Bloc similarly made him aware of the comparability of specific human experiences under totalitarian regimes. When Havel visited the United States right after the regime change in 1990 Wiesel went so far as to identify himself with Havel as the embodiment of human opposition. Addressing Havel, he declared “[t]onight I wish I could speak in Czech. [...] Tonight I wish I were Czech. Tonight in your presence we are all Czech.”⁴⁷⁴ Here, the destiny of the Czech writers is reduced to its core message: liberation from half a century of oppression. Expressing their solidarity with Havel allowed intellectuals like Wiesel to identify with their fate, which resulted—in contrast with the outcome of the Nazi period for its victims—in their actual freedom.

⁴⁷¹ Wiesel, “What Really Makes Us Free.”

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Rimer, “Upheaval in the East.”

LITERARY IMAGINATIONS: MILLER, ROTH, UPDIKE

Arthur Miller also believed his societal responsibility as an artist was based on his experiences in the Nazi period. In a conversation with Havel, Miller apparently remarked that “I became that way because of the time I grew up in, which was the Fascist period.” He thought that Hitler “might well dominate Europe, and maybe even have a tremendous effect on America, and I couldn’t imagine having an audience in the theater for two hours and not trying to enlist them in some spiritual resistance to this awful thing.”⁴⁷⁵ The “spiritual resistance” to Hitler provides the core motive for Miller to voice the concerns of banned writers and to address unspoken topics through his plays. Personal contacts and mutual literary influences established relationships between the two literary spheres and counteracted the political instrumentalization of literature. As a reaction to a personal encounter with Havel in 1963, Miller wrote the play *I Think About You a Great Deal*,⁴⁷⁶ which was performed at Avignon’s International Theatre Festival in 1982. In the play, a writer sits at his desk and apostrophizes the “Imprisoned One” who embodies Havel: “You are almost within range of the sound of our voices. You can almost hear us. I suppose. In effect. Whatever the reason, I really do think about you a great deal.”⁴⁷⁷ The writer reflects on the causes of his empathy for the “Imprisoned One,” and comes to the conclusion that “[i]n some indescribable way we are each other’s continuation [...] you in that darkness where they claw and pound at your imagination, and I out here in this space where I think about you [...] a great deal.”⁴⁷⁸ As a child of Polish Jewish émigrés, Miller yokes together “It joins us together” with “We are each other’s continuation” to create a direct biographical link between the destiny of the underground writer and the life of his Jewish ancestors. The shared experience of dictatorship obliges him to act according to the moral maxim of “thinking about him a great deal.”

This direct reference to two twentieth-century cases of totalitarianism raises the question about the individual relationship between inherited memories of the Shoah and the dedication to actively support persecuted writers in the ‘Other Europe.’ But to what extent were the

⁴⁷⁵ Cited in Bigsby, “The Poet.”

⁴⁷⁶ Miller, “I Think About You a Great Deal,” 264.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 265.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

traumatic experiences handed down to following generations, inscribed into the family memory of some of the concerned authors?⁴⁷⁹ It appears that Jewish writers such as Miller, who were the children or grandchildren of survivors of anti-Semitic pogroms, the Holocaust, and other forms of genocide and ethnic cleansing, turned the family memories they had absorbed into an active life mission. Miller refers explicitly to his family's memories of Nazi repression and to his earlier belief in the messianic salvation of Europe at the hands of the Red Army:

Since the first major blow to the equanimity of my mind was the victory of Nazism, first in Germany and later in the rest of Europe, the images I have of repression are inevitably cast in Fascist forms. In those times the Communist was always the tortured victim, and the Red Army stood as the hope of man, the deliverer. So to put it quite simply, although correctly, I think, the occupation of Czechoslovakia was the physical proof that Marxism was but one more self-delusionary attempt to avoid facing the real nature of power.⁴⁸⁰

The resemblance of the two dictatorships accounted for his emotional affinity and identification with authors like as Havel. This was exactly what Havel had always hoped for:

It has always been my hope in my writing that, by bearing witness to certain specific experiences of the world, I will be able to disclose something universally human, specific experiences only being a way and a means of saying something about being in general, about people in today's world, about the crisis of modern-day humanity—in other words, those matters that concern us all.⁴⁸¹

Havel was terrified by the idea that his plays and writings could not be understood outside of his own social sphere: "Were my plays regarded solely as a description of a particular social and political system, I would feel I had failed as an author."⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ Zinnecker, "Die 'transgenerationale Weitergabe,'" 148.

⁴⁸⁰ Miller, "The Sin of Power," 3.

⁴⁸¹ Cited in Vladislav, "Introduction," xiii.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

Similar to Arthur Miller, Philip Roth also offers a literary approach to the connection between his interest in the authors that formed his book series, *Writers from the Other Europe*, and his ancestors' origins. His perspective mirrors that of second generation of émigrés from the 'Other Europe.' In *The Prague Orgy*, Roth employs the novel's iconic hero (and Roth's fictional alter-ego) Nathan Zuckermann, a New York Jew who travels to Prague, to mirror his own perspectives on literary life in the city.⁴⁸³ Before his travels, Zuckermann meets the Czech writer Sisovsky in New York, who emigrated because he was not able to publish his work inside Czechoslovakia. Zuckermann counters Sisovsky's praise about the merits of his own writings with a few remarks that reveal his admiration for the writers inside the Soviet sphere: "It's you who's been punished in the harshest way. Banning your book, prohibiting your publication, driving you from your country—what could be more burdensome."⁴⁸⁴ Via Zuckermann, Roth philosophizes about the exceptional meaning of stories in Prague:

Here where the literary culture is held hostage, the art of narration flourishes by mouth. In Prague, stories aren't simply stories, it's what they have instead of life. Here they have become their stories, in lieu of being permitted to be anything else. Storytelling is the form their resistance has taken against the coercion of the powers that be.⁴⁸⁵

Though in itself not political, storytelling turns into a widespread form of literary resistance. Through the literary imagination, writers could freely set the stages of their fictional lives, fulfilling some of the emotional needs that everyday life could not offer.

Although focused mostly on literary writers from the 'Other Europe,' Roth also refers to the more general theme of persecuted writers. In this context, the scandal surrounding the publications of Sinyavsky and Daniel was a key moment for the reception of this literature in the West. Roth felt himself obliged to question his own role as a writer:

I am wholly in awe of writers like Sinyavsky and Daniel, of their personal bravery and their uncompromising devotion and dedi-

⁴⁸³ Versluys, "Philip Roth," 314.

⁴⁸⁴ Roth, *The Prague Orgy*, 6.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

cation to literature. To write in secrecy, to publish pseudonymously, to work in fear of the labor camp, to be despised, ridiculed, and insulted by the mass of writers turning out just what they're supposed to—it would be presumptuous to imagine one's art surviving in such a hostile environment, let alone coming through with the dignity and self-possession displayed by Sinyavsky and Daniel at their trial.⁴⁸⁶

The contrast of these two forms of literary life prompted Roth to champion the transfer of uncensored literature to the West.

This aspect is reflected in Roth's 1990 interview with Ivan Klíma, where he draws comparisons between the arts inside Czechoslovakia and the so-called free culture in the US: "When I returned to the United States from Prague after my first visit in the early seventies, I compared the Czech writers' situation to ours in America by saying, 'There nothing goes and everything matters, here everything goes and nothing matters.'"⁴⁸⁷ Roth points out how persecuted writers gained a prominent moral authority in the West because their literature made them into irreplaceable literary witnesses of that period of history:

It always seemed to me that there was a certain amount of loose talk in the West about "the muse of censorship" behind the Iron Curtain. I would venture that there were even writers in the West, who sometimes envied the terrible pressure under which you people wrote and the clarity of the mission this burden fostered: in your society you were virtually the only monitors of truth.⁴⁸⁸

In the eyes of the Western reader, the "muse of censorship" developed into an idealized literary situation. Although America conferred "freedom on the writer," it "trivializes his work" at the same time, turning literature into nothing more "than a harmless form of entertainment."⁴⁸⁹ Due to the relative meaninglessness of their work, Western authors looked with envy towards their Eastern European colleagues, in whose work "every

⁴⁸⁶ Cited in Lee, "You Must Change Your Life," 155.

⁴⁸⁷ Roth, "Conversation in Prague with Ivan Klíma," 53.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁹ Kakutani, "The Writers Who Shook a Government," C17.

word they write has endless implications.”⁴⁹⁰ Setting an example of what role writers could play in society, *samizdat* authors made Roth profoundly appreciate the role of writers in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁹¹ His desire for similar literary success that would have a real impact on people’s life made him however aware of his own shortcomings as a writer. This led Roth to confront the question of voyeurism and literary jealousy, which he considers manifest in his own and the overall Western reception of *samizdat*.

In this sense, Roth explores how Western nostalgia exceeds the borders of interpersonal sympathy. In *The Prague Orgy* the minister of culture asks Zuckermann if “they seem to you courageous? You find it thrilling, the price they pay for their great art?”⁴⁹² Here, Roth criticizes the schizophrenic literary nostalgia among North American writers for the simplistic division of morally good authors versus a degenerate moral system. This was coupled with envy for a concrete audience and the inherent solidarity created through the circulation of one’s writings in *samizdat*. “The surreptitious publication of serious literary works in small quantities,” Roth wrote, “must find an audience that is, generally speaking, more enlightened and intellectually more sophisticated than the wider Czech readership. *Samizdat* publication presumably fosters solidarity between writer and reader that can be exhilarating.”⁴⁹³ Having delved into the literary world of Prague, Roth promoted authors from the lost world to which his grandfather (an orthodox Jewish, Yiddish-speaking immigrant from Galicia) had belonged. The series’s title, *Writers from the Other Europe*, referred not only to the persecuted writers from the ‘Other Europe’ of the 1970s, but also to the lost world of East European Jewry. It was through this literature that Roth revived aspects of his own life story.

The literature Roth published extended beyond Jewish writers to take in authors who had no literary voice outside of *samizdat* or émigré circles. Roth’s “long odyssey from Newark to Prague” that Hana Wirth-Nesher charts, “is also a turning point in the Jewish-American literary tradition, for it marks the passage from a literature of immigration and assimilation into a literature of retrieval, of the desire to be part of a

⁴⁹⁰ Roth cited in *ibid*.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹² Roth, *The Prague Orgy*, 79. An interesting reflection on the role of intellectuals during dictatorships is given by Pleșu, “Intellectual Life under Dictatorship.”

⁴⁹³ Roth, “Conversation in Prague with Ivan Klíma,” 49.

Jewish literary legacy alongside the European and American literary traditions.”⁴⁹⁴ Reconnecting to his Jewish and Eastern European past seems to have played a role in Roth’s decision to establish his book series. Wirth-Nesher argues that as representative of a Jewish-American writer, Roth “will have to relocate himself, and since he cannot return to the past, he can only travel to the scene of that past, which for Roth is embodied in the city of Prague.”⁴⁹⁵ Having reconnected to Prague and its literary tradition, Roth tried to live a kind of Eastern European life in the United States:

My life in New York after *Portnoy* was lived in the Czech exile community—listening, listening, listening. I ate every night in Czech restaurants in Yorkville, talked to whoever wanted to talk to me and left all this *Portnoy* crap behind. That was idiotic, this was not idiotic. I lived up in Connecticut, where Philip Guston was my friend, and had my east European world in New York, and those were the things that saved me.⁴⁹⁶

Roth not only published the book series, but every week he went to a little college on Staten Island to attend Liehm’s classes on Czech culture.⁴⁹⁷ Through the book series, Roth brought together the various parts of his own life story, and integrated a forgotten past into his life in New York. Through Zuckermann’s words, Roth analyzes his private development against his new discovery of Prague, his Jewish past, and his American life. Roth’s autobiographically inspired novel stands out as a literary expression of a collective experience of many New York intellectuals: a shared memory that triggered in them a common activism vis-à-vis suppressed writers from the ‘Other Europe.’

Zuckermann allows Roth explore the emotional link between his attraction to Prague and his Central European past: “The sentiments stirred up by my circuitous escape route, or the association it’s inspired between my ancestors’ Poland, his Prague tenement, and the Jewish Atlantis of an American childhood.”⁴⁹⁸ Although never having been to Prague before, Zuckermann feels that Prague is in some way the “city

⁴⁹⁴ Wirth-Nesher, “From Newark to Prague,” 31.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁹⁶ Alvarez, “The Long Road Home.”

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ Roth, *The Prague Orgy*, 64.

that I've known all my life."⁴⁹⁹ As it becomes clear in the course of the novel, Zuckermann came to Prague in the hopes of smuggling the Yiddish manuscripts of a dead Jewish Czech author from Prague to North America for publication. Through Olga, a mediating figure of the Prague underground, Roth deciphers the set of problems involved in the migration of texts. Zuckermann's greed for the manuscripts is in evidence when he asks Olga, "How do I wrest these stories from you?" His main concern is getting hold of the stories and publishing them for a profit. Olga—functioning as Zuckermann's moral antagonist—uncovers his double standard:

So that's what you get out of it! That's your idealism! The marvelous Zuckerman brings from behind the Iron Curtain two hundred unpublished Yiddish stories written by a victim of a Nazi bullet. You will be a hero to the Jews and to literature and to all of the Free World. On top of all your millions of dollars and millions of girls, you will win the American Prize for Idealism about Literature. And what will happen to me? I will go to prison for smuggling a manuscript to the West.⁵⁰⁰

Here, Roth relies on the symbolic value of the unpublished Yiddish stories as representations of Jewish victimization to cross-reference the shared destinies of unpublishable literature during the two dictatorships. In addition, Roth employs the Olga figure to contrast the desired and undesired consequences of a Western publication, both for the publisher and for the author. Olga's accusations that Zuckermann is acting only out of self-interest foreground how the side effects of the moral and financial greed of some Western publishers were often dramatic for the authors. While publishers gained fame in the West for supporting and publishing forgotten stories, these publications often resulted in the authors' imprisonment. Olga further mediates ironic, anti-Semitic tropes to stress the selfish Western exploitation of underground literature: "Ah, you are doing it for idealistic reasons. You do it for literature. For altruism. You are a great American, a great humanitarian, and a great Jew."⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 70.

Olga emphasizes the obvious difference between the endangered idealism of authors and the easy, self-serving idealism of Western publishers: "Zuckermann, if you were such an idealist about literature as you want me to be, if you would make great sacrifices for literature as you expect me to make, we would have been married twenty minutes already."⁵⁰² In this way, the solidarity of *tamizdat* readers is thrown into question by their risk-free access to experiences of dictatorship through practices of reading. Roth also casts doubt on the altruism and the efficacy of Western declarations of solidarity. In the novel, Zuckermann proposes to publish an article in *The New York Times* in order to secure the Yiddish stories: "I'll tell them the whole story of these stories. They'll run an article about them."⁵⁰³ But Zuckermann neither reaches the point of creating Western publicity for the Jewish stories nor of gaining literary or moral inspiration from those secretive manuscripts. Roth voices the inherent risk of failure when trying to smuggle underground literature to the West:

I've lost the stories I came to Prague to retrieve. Another Jewish writer, who might have been is not going to be, his imagination won't leave even the faintest imprint and no one else's imagination will be imprinted on his, neither the policeman practicing literary criticism nor the meaning-mad students living only for art.⁵⁰⁴

Zuckermann loses the valuable Jewish stories because he neglects to securely smuggle the manuscripts to the West. Roth thus creates a direct link between Zuckermann's endeavor and the *tamizdat* practice of smuggling non-conformist literature out of the Eastern Bloc, which risked not just the loss of the manuscripts but also the authors' lives. He denounces the disproportionate nature of the relationship between the suffering writer and the Western consumer. Roth's literary strategy of linking the story of lost Jewish stories and the contemporary practice of *tamizdat* publications allows him to create biographical coherence between the experiences of the Shoah and the GULag.

Roth's personal fascination with writers who were discriminated against in Czechoslovakia and were unknown to anyone in New York

⁵⁰² Ibid., 72.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 84

can hardly be disconnected from his discovery of his Jewish past in the small streets and barren shops of Prague.⁵⁰⁵ Many of the experiences that befell interwar Jewish writers in Central and Eastern Europe—such as exclusion, loss of employment, persecution, and death—were shared by the new authors that Roth was supporting and publishing. Roth's editing of the book series, as Hermione Lee argues, could possibly be seen as an "expiration of that guilt (of the forgotten Jewish writer)." His personal "admiration for writers, who died in the war," "survived the camps," lived during state socialism: "under severe prohibitions in Czechoslovakia," or were "savagely attacked by the authorities"—such as the writers Bruno Schulz, Tadeusz Borowski, Milan Kundera, and Danilo Kiš—inevitably forced him to compare his own fate and his own past.⁵⁰⁶ Lee goes on to argue that Roth combines "the Jewish-American writer's guilt for the sufferings of Eastern European writers and, before that, for the Jews in Europe," with "a kind of wistfulness, even envy, for the writer, who has had more to sink his teeth into than books and relationships"—that is, two different aspects of the Jewish-American attitude towards the 'Other European' literature.⁵⁰⁷ Wirth-Nesher also argues that Roth's Newark-Prague odyssey and his desire to retrieve "the fiction of a Jewish writer from anonymity" in order to link "the Jewish history of loss to Jewish literary fathers" fits perfectly into the life stories of those New York intellectuals who belonged to the second generation of American Jewish émigrés from the Eastern parts of Europe.⁵⁰⁸

Roth addresses this close connection between the forgotten Jewish literary past of Prague and the public ignorance of a wide range of authors during an interview with Ivan Klíma, which mainly covered the new literary underground and the *samizdat* phenomenon. Is there still "a remnant left in Czech literature of the prewar Jewish culture, or have the mentality and sensibility of Jews, which were once strong in Prague, left Czech literature for good?"—Roth asks.⁵⁰⁹ Klíma replies that anyone "who has been through a concentration camp as a child—who has been completely dependent on an external power that can at any moment come in and beat or kill him and everyone around him—probably moves

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁰⁶ Lee, "You Must Change Your Life," 155.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Wirth-Nesher, "From Newark to Prague," 29.

⁵⁰⁹ Roth, "Conversation in Prague with Ivan Klíma," 67.

through life at least a bit differently.”⁵¹⁰ The daily lesson that “life can be snapped like a piece of string,” explains how his literature resulted from an “obsession with the problem of justice, with the feelings of people who have been condemned and cast out, the lonely and the helpless.” These topics had “lost nothing of their topicality” for either writer.⁵¹¹

In the same way that Roth employs his alter-ego Zuckermann to dive into the literary life of Czechoslovakia, John Updike also relies on an alter-ego, the Jewish-American writer, Henry Bech, a to reflect on his travels to Czechoslovakia in his novels. Before publishing his 1989 autobiographical short story “Bech in Czech,” Updike traveled to the Soviet Union, Romania, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia. In the 1960s, he realized that Soviet literary dissent had become “a hot topic” in New York.⁵¹² He saw it as his duty as a writer to support the oppressed Soviet colleagues, also by means of appeals;⁵¹³ however, he always tried to transcend politics by representing America’s dedication to free artistic expression. He visited the Soviet Union in 1964 where he met the Russian poet Andrei Voznesensky, whose work did not influence him as much as his “total performance”; his “different sense of himself that a Russian writer has than an American.”⁵¹⁴ In his poem “Money,” Updike notes that “[i]n the old Soviet Union there was nothing to buy, nothing to spend.” Yet, despite the lack of money, “[i]t was freedom of a kind, but not our kind.”⁵¹⁵ In 1977, Updike reflected on the possible impetus censorship could give to literary creation: “Censorship is to some degree flattering. Most art has been produced by subjects of autocratic regimes [...] restrictions have elicited from writers the ingenuities of correlative symbolism, euphemism, and telling omission.”⁵¹⁶ Updike, similarly to Roth, does not appear prepared to face the heroism of his East European writer colleagues.

In “Bech in Czech” Updike recognizes the heroic innocence of those ‘Other Europe’ writers who continued to write despite their ongoing persecution. In view of their oppression, Updike criticizes the inappropriate behavior and glamour of Western writers. Even more explicitly than

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, 67–68.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 68.

⁵¹² Miller, *John Updike*, 107.

⁵¹³ “U.S. Authors Protest Suppression of Soviet Writers,” 5.

⁵¹⁴ “American Centaur: An Interview with John Updike.”

⁵¹⁵ Updike, “Money,” in *Americana*.

⁵¹⁶ Updike, “The Plight of the American Writer,” 38.

Roth, Updike addresses the voyeurism of the *tamizdat* reader in “Bech in Czech.” Updike ridicules Western sensationalism regarding the aesthetic texture and condition of *samizdat*. During a visit to Prague, Henry Bech becomes acquainted with some underground writers and their literature. The defiant appearance of a *samizdat* piece fascinated him: “Bech had expected the pathos, the implied pecking of furtive typewriters, but not the defiant beauty of the end result.”⁵¹⁷ Later on, during a party at the American embassy, Bech turns to the text’s author, who is presented in the symbolic figure of a female Roma writer: “That was such a lovely book you showed me the other night. The delicate thin paper, the hand-done binding. It nearly made me cry.”⁵¹⁸ Just as Roth uses the figure of Olga to ventriloquize communist repression and the self-interest of Western intervention, Updike employs the perspective of the victimized Roma to counter the apparent moral voyeurism of Western authors with regard to the suffering of the underground writers. “It makes many to cry,” she says, “We are not monks. We do not enjoy to suffer.”⁵¹⁹

Updike’s texts throw into relief the aesthetic stakes of *samizdat* and *tamizdat*. While the aesthetics of the underground media were largely an unintended result of the official politics of censorship, it was nevertheless one of the main reasons for the sensationalist Western reception of *tamizdat* and *samizdat* texts. As discussed in Chapter 2, the manuscripts’ physical texture was perceived as a pure and undistorted symbol of suffering. On an aesthetic level, the perception of the *original intentions* of textual production inside the ‘Other Europe’ and the *actual* international textual reception often seriously diverged. Updike goes even further and calls Bech’s immense popularity as an American writer in Prague into question: “In Czechoslovakia he felt desperately unworthy; the unlucky country seemed to see in him an emblem of hope.”⁵²⁰ Bech appears overwhelmed by the false expectations placed on him as a ‘free’ Western writer: “To these fresh-faced innocents, he supposed, he was an American celebrity—not, of course, a rock star, smashing guitars and sobbing out his guts as the violet and magenta strobes pulsed and the stadium hissed and waved like a huge jellyfish, but with a touch of that same diabolic glamour.”⁵²¹ In view of the Prague writers’ real suffering,

⁵¹⁷ Updike, “Bech in Czech,” 16.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.* 10.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

Bech felt unworthy of the fame that surrounded him during his stay, especially when Czech writers queued up to receive his autograph:

Why? His books were petty and self-indulgent, it seemed to Bech as he repeatedly signed them, like so many checks that would bounce. In third-world countries, he had often been asked what he conceived to be the purpose of the writer, and he had had to find ways around the honest answer, which was that the purpose of the writer is to amuse himself, to indulge himself, to get his books into print with as little editorial smudging as he can, to slid through his society with minimal friction.⁵²²

Updike presents the American literary world as one whose only occupation is to amuse itself and to trim works according to the expectations of the literary market. The novel's moral conflict culminates in a meeting between Bech and a former prisoner who had spent ten years in prison: "The man's hands twisted under Bech's eyes, as if in the throes of torture. Bech noticed that the fingers were in fact bent, broken. How would he, the American author asked himself, stand up to having his fingernails pulled? He could think of nothing he had ever written that he would not eagerly recant."⁵²³ The physical experience of oppression and persecution—embodied in the prisoner's hands—forces Bech to question the purpose of his own writing.

Here, *samizdat* becomes a symbol of a Central European experience whose 'real' and 'original' literary handling is entirely reserved for underground authors. Updike sees in this the danger of a new literary envy:

to have this anxiety about not being Solzhenitsyn. I, myself, am not sure that the Soviet oppressions of writers should be encouraged in this country as a way of making our writers write better [...] George Steiner harks to this point often in his writings, saying how frivolous, how domestic and trivial American, Free World writing is and how admirable is this stuff which the giants of the Soviet culture have squeezed out around the censors and the commissars. I find this a horrendous point

⁵²² Ibid., 12.

⁵²³ Ibid., 14.

because it does imply that we'd all be better off if we were oppressed, and seems to disregard the fact that most of these writers have expressed themselves by going underground or out of the country. [...] But sure, we have a bad conscience.⁵²⁴

This "bad conscience" led to various types of activism, including public appeals for persecuted, maltreated, exiled, and imprisoned writers in such publications as the *NYRB* and *The New York Times*. Updike sharply criticizes the difference between the ease of printing such appeals and the often dramatic consequences for the writers. If Voznesensky "carries his point," Updike writes, "it will not be thanks to indignant editorials in this country or petitions signed by writers smug in their pre-bought freedom. If he cannot carry his point, let him at least survive. It's not up to the Americans to fight the cause for Soviet dissent."⁵²⁵ Inside the 'Other Europe' Western petitions were also viewed critically. In Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Tomas, the main character, is asked to sign a petition in favor of political prisoners, which he refuses:

No I won't sign it. First because it won't help Hubl and the others, but mainly because helping them is not its real purpose. Its real purpose is to let Ferdinand and his friends feel they're not absolutely pointless. It's just moral exhibitionism [...]. All they're doing is exploiting the prisoners' misfortune to draw attention to themselves. If they're so concerned for the families they should go and do something useful for the families, instead of—for all they know—making things worse for the prisoners.⁵²⁶

The accusation of the signatories' moral exhibitionism harshly opposes the self-portrait of Western activists. The seeming dependence of underground writers on Western efforts and support is reversed; hence Western intellectuals become dependent on 'Other European' writing for their moral concerns.

Besides this, in various literary initiatives and interpretations the story of non-conformist writers from the 'Other Europe' is not only used to inform the Western reader about the repression of literary life in the

⁵²⁴ Cited in Miller, *Updike and the Cold War*, 128–29.

⁵²⁵ Cited in *Ibid.*, 132.

⁵²⁶ Cited in Stoppard, *Rock N'Roll*, x.

Eastern Bloc. Just as Wiesel, Miller, and Roth used underground literature to refer to earlier forms of persecution and repression in the early twentieth century and the Holocaust, *tamizdat* literature filled in gaps of literary and experiential history, undergoing a comparable process as the one undergone by Holocaust literature, which today represents the paradigmatic symbol of suffering in contemporary history:

the Holocaust was extracted from its time- and place-specific environment and currently operates in the political cultures of perpetrators and victims alike as the symbolic boundary between the good and the absolute evil. [...] It has turned into the supra-denominational passion story of late modernity.⁵²⁷

Similar to this symbolic function of Holocaust literature, *tamizdat* literature has been reduced to its core message: it has become another icon of human suffering and a dominant symbol of a new transnational morality. However, feelings of moral obligation—the utmost importance of their engagement in the cause of persecuted writers—often originated in personal memories of their own families’ sufferings. Transformed into a universal symbol of persecution, *tamizdat* could be employed by the New York intellectuals to communicate their parents’ or grandparents’ own experiences of persecution during the Nazi period. In this way, the joint life project of publishing *tamizdat* and rescuing these stories from oblivion enabled American Jewish intellectuals to shed light on their own life stories. The biographical roots of New York Jewish intellectuals in the ‘Other Europe’ did not constitute their sole motivation. The ability to reconnect to their ancestors’ pasts through more recent literature also colored their activism. They had been more receptive to the personal memories and accounts of persecuted writers from the otherwise ‘forgotten’ parts of Europe. In their function as disseminators of underground literature in the West, and as literary narrators of persecuted writers’ lives, New York intellectuals like Philip Roth made private memories of the Holocaust and the Gulag available to the Western reader. In this way, they shaped the Western public remembrance of the extermination of human lives in the twentieth century.

⁵²⁷ Dubiel, “The Remembrance of the Holocaust,” 61.



Figure 12: Cover of Czech *samizdat* version of a Polish book: Czesław Miłosz, *Zotročený duch* [*The Captive Mind*], Prague 1988. [Original Polish Title: *Zmewolony umysł*, Paris: Instytut Literacki 1953]. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

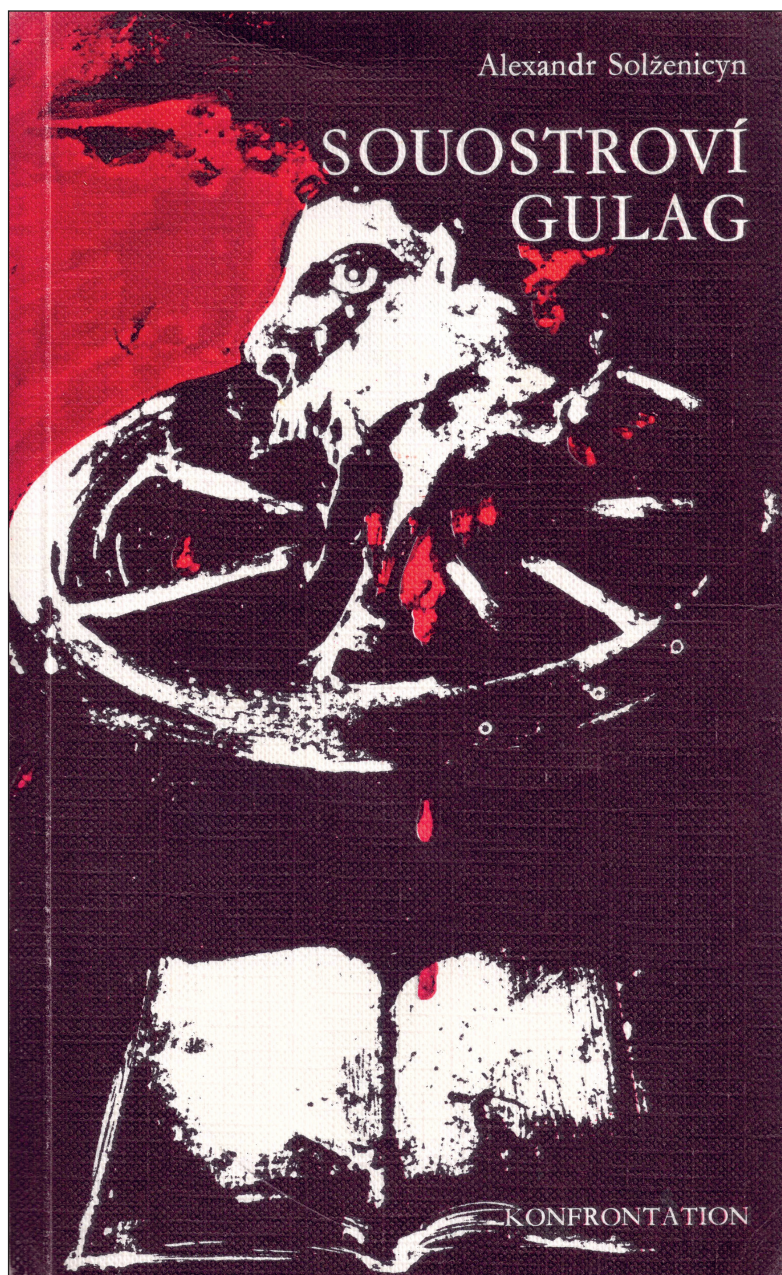


Figure 13: Cover of the Czech *samizdat* version of a Russian book: Alexander Solženicyn, *Souostrovi Gulag* [*Gulag Archipelago*], Prague: Konfrontace Knižnice, 1974. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

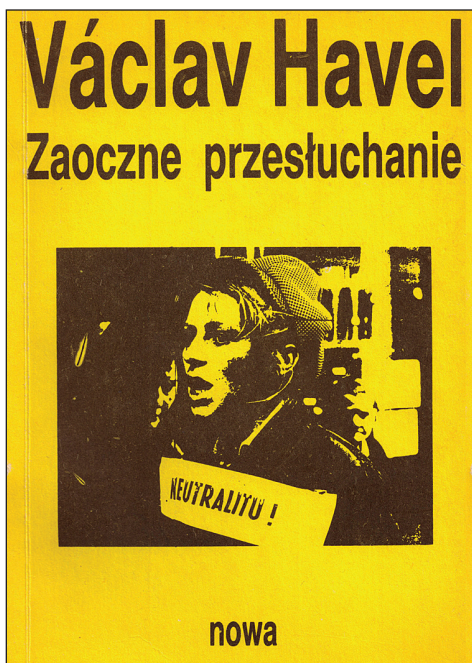


Figure 14: Cover of the Polish samizdat version of a Czech book: Václav Havel, *Zaoczne przesłuchanie* [Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvizdala] Warsaw: Nowa 1989. [Original Czech Title: *Dálkový výslech*]. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

Figure 15: Cover the of Polish samizdat version of a Czech book: Milan Šimečka, *Przywrócenie porządku* [The Restoration of Order: The Normalization of Czechoslovakia, 1969-1976]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krag, 1982. Polish Samizdat Version [Original Czech Samizdat: *Obnovení pořádku: příspěvek k typologii realného socialismu*], Prague: Edice Petlice, 1978. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.



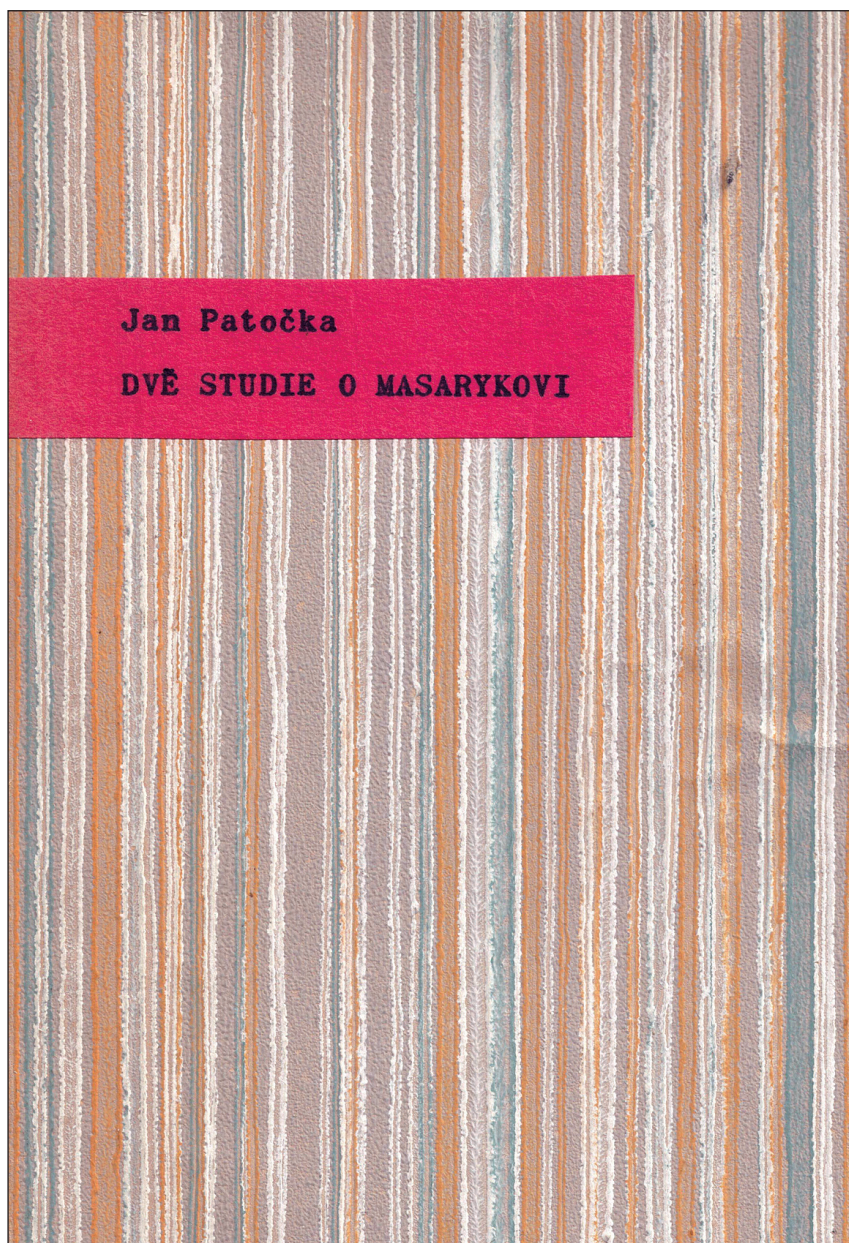


Figure 16: Aesthetic appearance of a Czech *samizdat* publication: Cover of Jan Patočka, *Dvě studie o Masarykovi* [*Two Studies about Masaryk: An Attempt at a Czech National Philosophy and its Failure*]. Prague: Edice Kvart (Quarto Editions), 1977. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

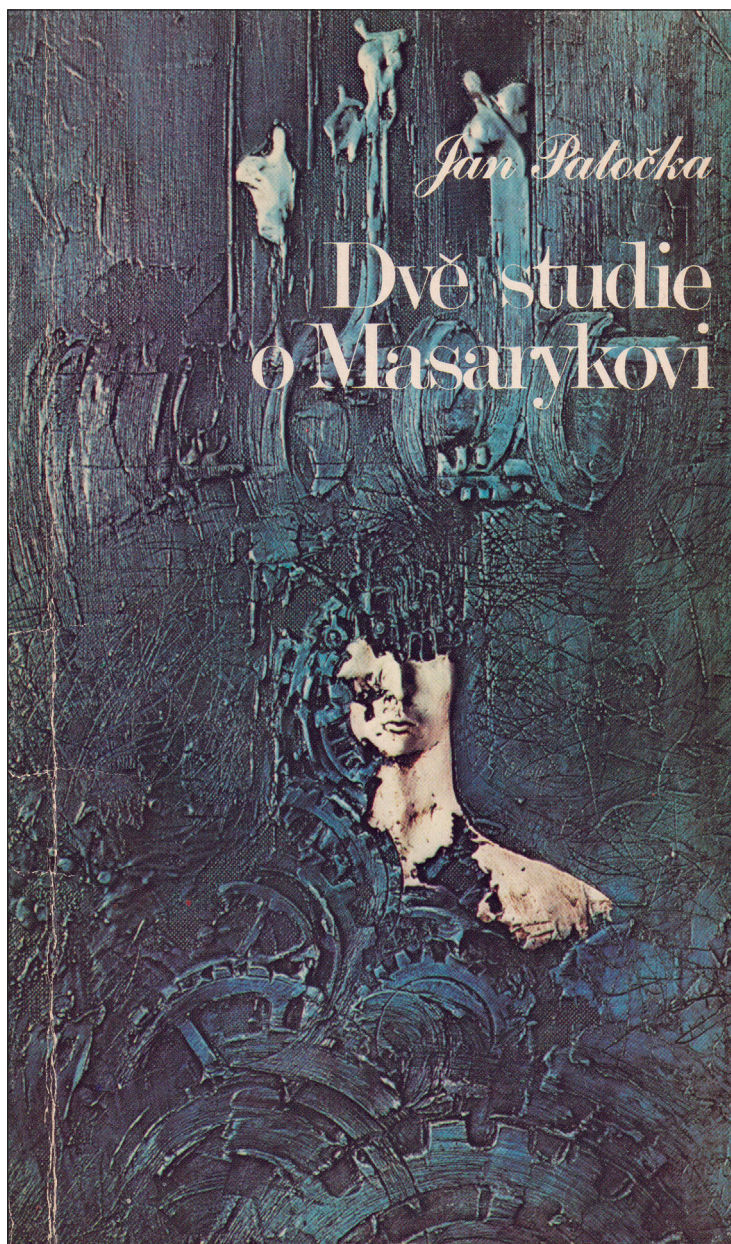


Figure 17: Aesthetic appearance of a Czech *tamizdat* publication: Cover of Jan Patočka, *Dvě studie o Masarykovi*. [*Two Studies about Masaryk: An Attempt at a Czech National Philosophy and its Failure*]. Toronto: Sixty-Eight Publishers, 1980. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

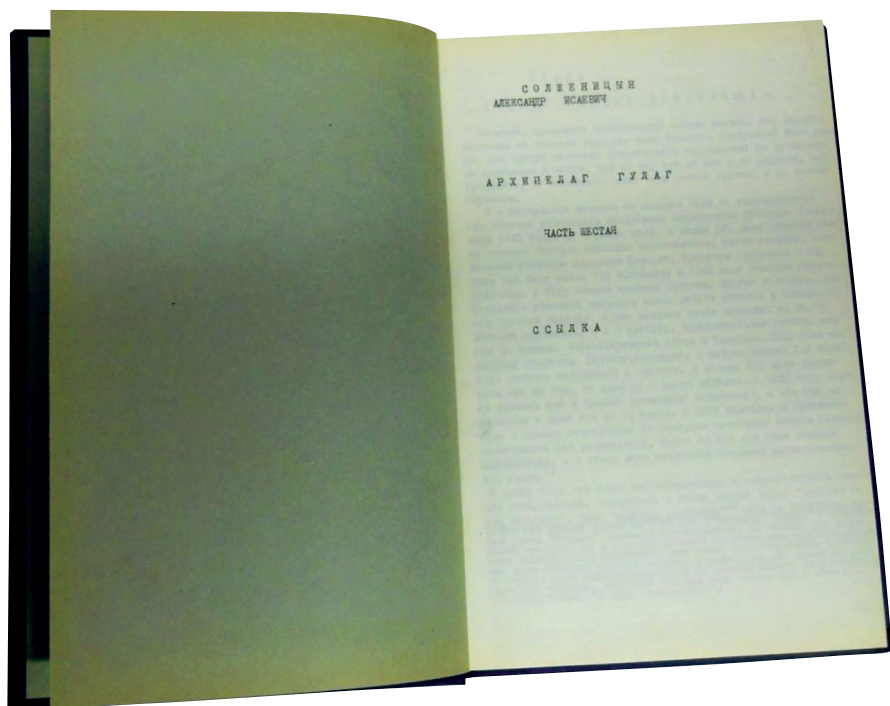


Figure 18: Aesthetic appearance of a Russian *samizdat* publication: First page of the *samizdat* edition of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Arkhipelag Gulag*, FSO 01-005.2/13 Collection Mark Rubinovic, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, Bremen, Historical Archive.

P332  PERENNIAL LIBRARY \$1.95

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

The Gulag Archipelago

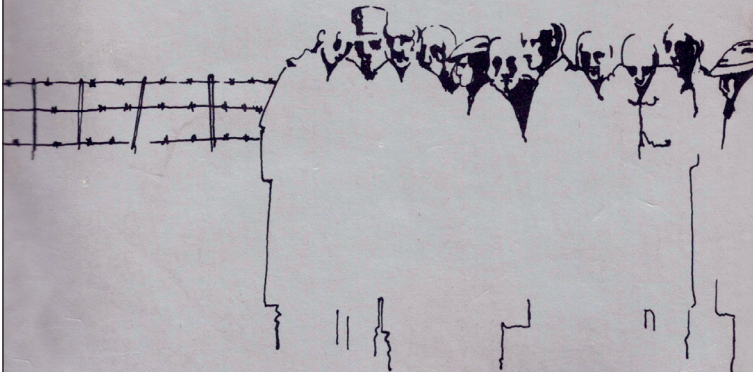


Figure 19: Aesthetic appearance of a Russian *tamizdat* publication: Cover of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

CHAPTER 3

Tamizdat Border Crossings

RADIO FREE EUROPE AND RADIO LIBERTY

“Exiles will pierce the Iron Curtain,” announces the headline of a *New York Times* article from July 3, 1950. How will these exiles accomplish this? In a “New Radio Broadcast Tomorrow.”¹ The Cold War ether was a prime target for institutions and individuals that wanted to overcome a “divided sky” and a divided Europe.² Following from this, recent research trends approach radio during the Cold War as a zone of convergence rather than one of ideological antagonism and isolation.³ The link between the airwaves and the transmission of *tamizdat* requires focusing on radio’s character as a medium for transnational and interactive communication. The Iron Curtain’s unnatural separation of European cultures aroused widespread discontent, prompting dedication to actively counteract this reality even by illegal means.

As real socialist regimes tried to monopolize access to literary life, all activities related to not only the production of literature inside the Soviet Bloc but also to its international circulation were severely surveilled. Censorship and opinion control played a key role in the preserva-

¹ “Exiles Will Pierce the Iron Curtain,” 1.

² Lindenberger, “Geteilte Welt, Geteilter Himmel?”

³ For this new approach see Risso, ed., “Radio Wars”; Badenoch, Fickers, and Henrich-Franke, “Airy Curtains in the European Ether,” 11.

tion of political and ideological power.⁴ The countries' official censorship policies affected the content and distribution of printed books, as well as the economics of its physical production, including the distribution of printing paper and equipment. Officials severely restricted access to technical instruments such as typewriters, printers, Xerox machines, and audio-visual equipment, as well as to raw materials such as paper, ink, and various types of glue used for producing and turning out literature. In order to obtain original written manuscripts and production materials, uncensored distribution channels had to be established, reaching across political frontiers inside and beyond the Soviet Bloc.

Socialist control organs also severely restricted access to the Western European literary market for writers from the East, both as passive consumers and active contributors throughout the region. But legislation could not prevent the cross-Curtain transfer of otherwise unpublishable works to Western Europe and the United States, or the influx of inaccessible Western books to Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe. The secretive "social practice" of illegally producing and circulating *samizdat* and *tamizdat* was never prevented entirely,⁵ even if many authors decided to publish their works under West European pseudonyms to prevent identification with the unauthorized publication. The cross-border circulation of the materials was dependent on the active and often physical contribution of many individuals and key institutions. Nobel Prize winners, Western writers and publishers, ambassadors, human rights activists, *émigrés*, 'carrier-pigeons,' translators, backpackers, tourists, typists, printers, and many others transpierced the Iron Curtain's tenacious but imagined impermeability. Had these people not ignored the political reality of Europe's division and taken personal risks, contact between the literary worlds of Eastern and Western Europe would have been restricted to officially arranged exchanges.

Still, throughout Central and Eastern Europe the secret police exercised great pressure to prevent any kind of unsupervised contact between Eastern and Western mediators. The KGB regularly increased its "surveillance of known dissidents and of foreign newsmen," and sent its squads of KGB agents to brutally break up "meetings between Russians

⁴ Wedgwood Benn, "Glasnost, Dialogue and East-West Relations," 297.

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu's term "social practice" underlies an approach to *tamizdat* as a form of social participation and cross-border activity. See Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

and Western newsmen.”⁶ Meetings with foreigners were dangerous both for the oral and material exchange of information.⁷ Meeting up with foreign journalists and correspondents inside the Bloc, which was actually possible only from the late 1960s onwards, allowed dissidents to gain access to a Western audience. While the Stalinist period was marked by a distinct lack of information about the disappearance of millions of people, by the 1970s they publicized every arrest, “telling Western correspondents in Moscow the facts they had been able to confirm.”⁸ When Western journalists arrived home with new information about the work of underground writers, or when diplomats or academics managed to smuggle important literary works to Western capitals, the first major step in permeating the Iron Curtain was accomplished. Activists in the East and the West imagined and tested inventive ways to smuggle literature. Both the *samizdat* and the cross-Iron Curtain network were reputed to be “nebulous,” composed of informal, loose relationships that were difficult to pin down and were central to preventing the networks’ dissolution.⁹

Transmission to and publication in the West were equally complex and opaque. Political exiles and other émigrés played an important role in advancing the contact zone between authors and possible Western publishers. These authors needed such publishers as Bernstein or Kline, the publisher of the English language *Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*, who “were never far in their conversation from the cause of Mr. Sakharov and the other Soviet dissidents.”¹⁰ These Manhattan personas were buttressed “by an outspoken legion who are taking the great risks and penalties of publicly demanding the civil rights of free expression.”¹¹ Although not risking their own lives with publishing the works of the dissidents, these public figures were key to introducing a new strain of writers to the Western reading world.

Some Western governments, such as the United States, were committed to enabling the physical transfer of literary goods, their translation and their public appearance: “[i]f Moscow finances so much of Communist propaganda the world over, why shouldn’t Washington aid at least *tamizdat* and *radizdat* [records of foreign radio broadcasts], if not

⁶ Seeger, “Soviets Hamstring Dissident Publication,” A9.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Parry, “Samizdat is Russia’s Underground Press,” 249.

¹⁰ Clines, “About New York,” 19.

¹¹ Ibid.



Figure 20: Photograph of the building of Radio Free Europe in Munich. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

samizdat directly?”¹² This is indeed what happened. Initially only indirectly through the CIA, from the late 1940s onwards the US government invested significant amounts of money and resources to set up a number of ‘Free Europe’ institutions intended to counter Soviet propaganda and promote Western democratic values. American Cold War radio stations streamed into the Soviet sphere. They crossed the Iron Curtain, keeping the flow of information alive. Apart from their natural aim as news broadcasters, radio stations reflected the way the media crossed geographical, cultural, and ideological borders during the Cold War, and slowly enabled trans-Iron Curtain communication. From the early 1950s, the mission of RFE and RL was to supply Eastern Europeans with uncensored news.

It all started with the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE), later the Free Europe Committee (FEC), in 1949. Its certificate of incorporation from May 11, 1949, states that their objective is “to help non-Fascist and non-Communist exiles and refugees to maintain themselves in useful occupation during their absence from their homelands and to come to know the people of the United States,” in order to better “understand their spirit and aims; to assist these exiles and refugees in maintaining contact with their fellow citizens.”¹³

¹² Parry, “Samizdat is Russia’s Underground Press,” 249.

¹³ “Free Europe: Certification of Incorporation and By-Laws as amended to November 1, 1963.” MD, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records Relating to Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty 1964–1972. RFE/RL Portions of March 18 Report to Assessment of RFE-1964, Box 1. National Archives at College Park (NACP), College Park, MD in Washington.

The NCFE established a publishing division, the Free Europe Press, producing reports, analyses, and a journal. Free Europe Press originally aimed to increase the movement of literature between the Blocs,¹⁴ often through person-to-person contacts between East and West. To do this, it relied on exiles from Eastern Europe, who embodied the failure of state socialism and were keen to voice their critical stance towards it.¹⁵ These exiles, who joined national committees at the press, worked closely with their contacts inside the ‘captive nations’ to increase the flow of literature. Their 1958 mission statement reads as follows:



Figure 21: Photograph of a studio of Radio Free Europe, English Garden, Munich. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

[t]o use the printed word to reach centers of influence in Eastern Europe and, selectively, in the Free World, to communicate ideas and information which will nourish appetites for change within the Soviet orbit and which will increase the pressure of world public opinion on the Kremlin, leading to progressively more freedom for the captive peoples, and ultimately, to complete freedom.¹⁶

Their main target was the East European intelligentsia, to be reached both through person-to-person contact and the delivery of printed mate-

¹⁴ Tőkés, “Human Rights and Political Change,” 1.

¹⁵ See Dore Hill, “Voices of Hope” and Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 12.

¹⁶ “Advisory Group Survey of FE Proposed Agenda,” April 17, 1958, Free Europe Organization and Publications 1951–59. Box 197, Folder 6, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

rials.¹⁷ The increasing demand for Western news and information from people isolated behind the Iron Curtain supported the cultural strategy of institutions such as the NCFE :

[m]ore contact with the West is the popular demand in Poland today. It is only natural that in this atmosphere even the smallest gift from the West, such as grants to students and scholars, Western book invitations issued to various groups, delegations and individuals, films, Western theatre companies, exhibitions and even ordinary Western tourists are accepted with interest and gratitude, since they become an outward sign of the historical links, which the regime is trying to strike out of peoples' mind.¹⁸

Free Europe organizations thought the first step towards reuniting Europe was to reconstitute the interrupted flow of information and literature through radio broadcasts, journals, and direct person-to-person initiatives. A report on radio programming in Hungary from 1967 points out that the "the Hungarian public is acutely and keenly aware of its cultural as well as of its political isolation from the West," for which reason it developed an intense "demand for cultural re-association with the West," which the radio stations believed to be "considerably easier to satisfy, especially through broadcasting."¹⁹ In Romania, too, there existed "desires to join an integrated Europe with transatlantic ties."²⁰ Judging

¹⁷ "East European Operations," FEP Operations, May 16, 1958, Free Europe Organizations and Publications 1951–59. Box 197, Folder 6, Sheet 1–10, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹⁸ Polonia Book Fund, Person-to-Person Program, Monthly Report for June 1960, Publications Development Operations Reports 1960 Jan–June. Box 262, Folder 6, Sheet 1–7, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹⁹ L. C. Tihany, Kecskemethy, and J. Pauker. "Hungarian Program Review Group," September 6, 1967. In *Hungarian Program Review*, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State. Records Relating to Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty 1964–1972. Sheet 1–8, Sheet 7. National Archives at College Park (NACP), College Park, MD in Washington.

²⁰ Mar Garrison and William Petersen, *Final Report–Romanian Program Review Group RFE And VOA Broadcasts to Romania*, 7 September 1967. *Romanian Program Review*, Sheet 1–9, Sheet 2. Records Relating to Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty 1964–1972, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

from the source materials of the Free Europe Committee and Free Europe Press regarding the role of exiles and émigrés (both individuals and institutions) in shaping their projects, it seems they served a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, émigrés wanted to foster contacts between East European expats in the West and their fellow countrymen in their homeland. On the other hand, they hoped to transmit their knowledge to their Western colleagues in the ‘free world.’ All this was meant to contribute to a “re-association of East and West Europe.”²¹ The historic idea of a common Europe strongly influenced the Free Europe organizations.

A 1962 memorandum describes a particularly literary concept of Europe that inspired a 1957 mailing program in which the West sustained a one-way flow of articles and books across the Iron Curtain:

For centuries the written word had been the link between the two parts of Europe, and the feeling of communion with West Europe and the world at large had survived in East Europe throughout its precarious history thanks to the circulation of books in foreign languages. Hence our decision to make books our means of communication with the Captive Nations.²²

This initiative was sparked by a group of young Americans and East European exiles,²³ who felt that Eastern Europe was falling more and more into oblivion in the Western consciousness. John Matthews, a former Free Europe Press employee, describes this tendency at the mailing program’s founding meeting as follows: “[o]ne half of Europe had been unnaturally sealed off from the other half for the past eight years, and people sensed that this could not last much longer [...] For the vast majority of Americans, the other half was now off the map.”²⁴

The reunification of this divided Europe was to be accomplished not by “political and other directly antagonizing material,” but by supplying

²¹ “Policy and Planning Statement on Exile, Émigré and Ethnic Group Relations with the East European Regimes and People and with FEC Programs,” Publications and Special Projects Division, East-West Contacts 1960–68. Box 258, Folder 10, Sheet 1–9, Sheet 2. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

²² “Mailing Project: A summary,” 26 July 1962, East West Contacts, Publications and Special Projects, 1961–64. Box 258, Folder 8, Sheet 1–3, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

²³ Matthews, “The West’s Secret Marshall Plan for the Mind,” 3 (online).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 (online).

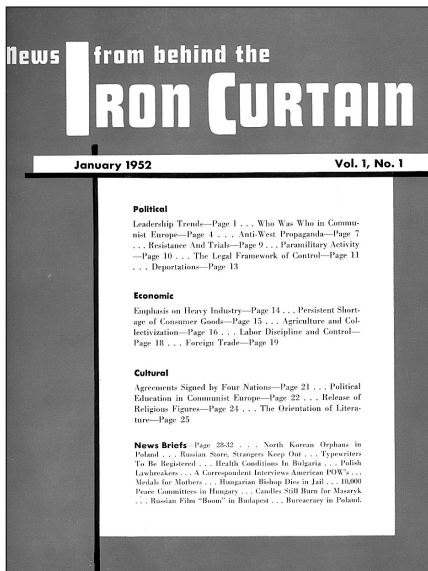


Figure 22: Cover of the first issue of *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January, 1952. Library Collection of Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

example of what would happen if the West did not start acting against the literary and cultural division of Europe.²⁵ Building bridges of knowledge between Eastern and Western forms of intellectual life could establish this mutual exchange.

In order to inform the West about developments taking place in the other parts of Europe, Free Europe Press published a series of journals. By 1957, it had established the English *News from Behind the Iron Curtain* and *East Europe*, the German *Hinter Dem Eisernen Vorhang*, the French *Témoignages* and the Italian *L'Altra Europa*. The concept of an *Altra*

people in the East with “ideas, forms of entertainment, works of art, fashions, sources of varied information.” Russia, for instance, completely failed in providing her people with a substitute for the “banned Western sources of intellectual, spiritual or aesthetic life, not to mention sources of information.”²⁵ By reconstituting literary and cultural transfers, the mailing program aimed to create among all European people a “feeling of communion of this world, integration into the spiritual life of our age, and the knowledge that they have not been abandoned.”²⁶ The Romanian émigré and head of the book distribution program George C. Minden used the idea of a “communication breakdown,” as in the case of Russia in the 1920s and 1930s, as a threatening

²⁵ George Minden, Mailing Operation Monthly Report #14, October 25, 1957, cited in Matthews, “The West’s Secret Marshall Plan for the Mind,” 9 (online).

²⁶ Ibid., 10 (online).

²⁷ Minden, “The Book Project,” cited in Matthews, “The West’s Secret Marshall Plan for the Mind,” 11 (online).

Europa offered Western institutions a name for those parts of Europe that were culturally cut off from the West. There were discussions dealing with the idea of a ‘new Europe,’ a larger unified entity that was the key to Germany’s reunification.²⁸

A “Policy and Planning Statement” from the late 1960s indicates that in the context of a desire for unity, émigrés could be used as guides, smugglers, publishers, to secure invitations to conferences and meetings, or to organize discursive spaces where persecuted writers could express free opinions.²⁹ Apart from offering practical assistance to Free Europe, émigrés often symbolically represented a moral authority, having experienced persecution inside the Bloc and existing now as liberated agents of their “countrymen’s aspirations for freedom and independence.” Exile organizations were essential to the Free Europe Committee because these showed “the world at large that there is no acquiescence in the East European status quo,” and because they could carry out effective programs to keep the East European issues before world opinion.³⁰ While officials preferred to employ first- or second-generation émigrés, they also wanted “their personal, cultural, and emotional links with the ‘old country’ [to] remain alive.”³¹

Émigrés also needed to broker alliances with Western intellectuals. Without the strong support of the Western public, the committee’s activities on behalf of the liberation of the captive European nations fell short. Free Europe’s objectives could only be realized through a combination of the exiles’ experience with Western intellectuals’ effectiveness and their influence on public opinion. In a shift away from emphasizing exile organizations, the overall aim of the West’s publishing philosophy turned

²⁸ Memorandum, November 14, 1966, Subject: Brzezinski Talk at the Atlantic Institute’s East-West Conference, Rome October 21–23, 1966. East-West Conference 1968–1970, Box 177, Folder 4, Sheet 1–4, Sheet 2. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

²⁹ “Policy and Planning Statement on Exile, Émigré and Ethnic Group Relations with the East European Regimes and People and with FEC Programs,” Sheet 4.

³⁰ Reorientation of Exile Organizations, Free Europe Organizations and Publications, Strictly Confidential, April 1, 1960. Box 197, Folder 8, Sheet 1–14, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

³¹ “Policy and Planning Statement on Exile, Émigré and Ethnic Group Relations with the East European Regimes and People and with FEC Programs,” Sheet 2.

“towards [the] creative cooperation of exiles [...] with West Europeans.”³² Regular contact between émigrés and Western intellectuals was thought to be a step towards furthering the personal ties between Eastern and Western Europeans, and an “attempt to bring about as much a rebirth as possible of old ties, a feeling of political independence, and enhancement of the idea of cultural similarity among all the European peoples.”³³ This effort to promote shared values—in the 1950s, this shared value was anticommunism—was specifically aimed at increasing levels of mutual understanding between intellectuals in the East and the West.³⁴ As one source reads: “*The Eastern Europe Publications Exchange Fund* has as its general objective the bridging of the gap in thought and knowledge between key persons in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe on the one hand and the United States on the other [...] affecting an exchange of current and substantive basic material.”³⁵

Changing public opinion in general and the attitude of Western intellectuals in particular to encourage disillusionment with Soviet-type communism was a high priority. For this reason, the transfer of literature was targeted not only at the people of Eastern Europe, but at those in the West as well. Effective documentation of the situation and analysis of the events in the Soviet sphere were a means of strengthening the resistance of Western intellectuals to Soviet propaganda.³⁶

Intellectuals in the West became the main target, as decision-makers at the Free Europe Committee hoped they could change the Western attitude towards the Soviet Union and communism. By fixing the intellectuals’ attention on the destiny of their colleagues behind the Iron Curtain, they hoped to create a path towards a joint engagement against the ideological and cultural polarization of the world into power blocs.

³² The New Mission of FEOP in Europe, The Program, Recipient: Minton, Europe Guidance, Free Europe Organizations and Publications, 12, 1960. Box 197, Folder 8, Sheet 1–11, Sheet 9. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

³³ Ibid., Sheet 6.

³⁴ FEP Divisional Policies, May 14, 1958, Free Europe Organizations and Publications 1951–59. Box 197, Folder 6, Sheet 1–3, Sheet 2. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

³⁵ “What It Does,” Eastern Europe Publications Exchange Fund, Inc., Pursuant to the Membership Corporations Law. Box 177, Folder 9, Sheet 1–5, Sheet 2. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

³⁶ FEP Divisional Policies, May 14, 1958, Sheet 3.

Similar to the way in which the various Free Europe institutions sought out leaders among the exile community, the Free Europe Committee hoped to attract “opinion-leaders”³⁷ and “leadership groups” in the West by providing them with information about the terrors of communism.³⁸ To reach these goals in the Western orbit, they disseminated translated materials in the mass media, above all in radio broadcasts and newspapers.³⁹

Apart from the immediate interest in shaping public opinion on the other side of the Iron Curtain, Western public opinion also played an important role. Free Europe’s exile organizations directed a large part of their activities towards shaping the Western concept of communism and introduce germs of anti-communism diplomatically. These aims are reflected in the following mission statement:

1. To be a symbol of the captive peoples in the free world, and to dramatize their plight, keeping alive in the free world the subject of Soviet colonialism. 2. To undertake representational activities and specific projects which keep the issue of the captive peoples before world opinion [...]. 3. To provide to the free world [...] accurate information on developments in the Soviet Bloc, particularly the East European countries.⁴⁰

Groups composed of émigrés and Western intellectuals focused their attention on specific nations, trying to put this mission into practice.

The original aim of the various Free Europe institutions was to increase the movement of literature between the East and the West,⁴¹ often by means of person-to-person contacts (and only later, as with RFE and RL, to broadcast the material back into the Soviet Union, as will be explored shortly). Most of the services of the Free Europe Press took place at a national level, in the sense that there were, for instance, national programs for Poland or Hungary. One of the major initiatives was the British publishing house in exile, the Polonia Book Fund, which published books from Poland and tried to bring them back into

³⁷ Ibid., Sheet 2.

³⁸ Ibid., Sheet 1.

³⁹ The New Mission of FEOP in Europe, 1960, Sheet 10.

⁴⁰ Reorientation of Exile Organizations, Free Europe Organizations and Publications, April 1, 1960, Sheet 9.

⁴¹ Tóké, “Human Rights and Political Change,” 1.

the country. Free Europe Press, on the other hand, took up the additional job of translating texts into other East European languages so that authors across the Eastern Bloc could read literature from their Soviet-dominated neighbors. For instance, Milovan Đilas's *Nova klasa* (*New Class*) was translated into Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, and Bulgarian, while Orwell's *Animal Farm* was widely translated, broadcast and distributed inside the Soviet Bloc.⁴² In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Polonia established the Person-to-Person Program, a social network for the distribution of books in London, Paris, Brussels, Stockholm, Rome, and Munich that dispensed thousands of books to East Europeans in the West.⁴³

This complex was shaped by personal contacts extending across the Iron Curtain. The various publishing initiatives relied greatly on the "network of cultural institutions [...] that come into contact with visitors in the context of libraries, book shops, publishing houses, clubs, and cultural associations."⁴⁴ Activists in the West, often émigrés, as well as the recipients inside the 'captive nations' worked together closely in order to increase the flow of literature. A 1959 monthly report details the "climate of mutual trust" that "exists between our stringers and unpaid representatives, book suppliers and distributors, and—most important—between our Program personnel and our recipients."⁴⁵ As the institutionalization of such literary transfers was still in its nascency, individuals played an important part in keeping these contacts alive and helping books reach their destinations. The same monthly report stated that the "enthusiasm of an average recipient towards the Program and his willingness to take the risks of illegal transportation of anti-Communist literature, provides

⁴² "FEP Publications," May 15, 1958, Free Europe Organization 1951–59. Box 197, Folder 6, Sheet 1–6, Sheet 5. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records. On Orwell see Rodden, *George Orwell*.

⁴³ "Memorandum: New Opportunities arising from East-West contacts and additional means of reaching persons in the Captive countries," 1959(?), Publications Development Corporation Operations Reports 1959. Box 262, Folder 5, Sheet 1–5, Sheet 2. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

⁴⁴ "East European Operations," FEP Operations, May 16, 1958.

⁴⁵ Polonia Book Fund Ltd., Person-to-Person Program, Monthly Report for December 1959, Publications Development Operations Reports 1959. Box 262, Folder 5, Sheet 1–5, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

the best proof of the effectiveness of the activity.”⁴⁶ The program was meant to help East European travelers smuggle forbidden books into the Eastern Bloc, but also to provide visitors from Eastern European countries with literature they could not obtain in their home country.

In 1959, the Polonia Book Fund received a message from their representative in Brussels, stating that “the greatest interest among visitors [...] is still caused by *Doctor Zhivago*. It is a hit.”⁴⁷ Around the same time, a thank-you note reached them declaring gratitude “for your consignment of *Dr. Zhivago* which is still our best-seller and is likely to remain” so for many months.⁴⁸ A similar note came from their representative in Rome: “[t]he younger visitors ask for the strongest political literature (Anders, Dilas, Pasternak).”⁴⁹ Another note from Paris confirmed the far-reaching fame of Pasternak’s book, even in the Soviet Union where the book had not yet been officially published. The demand for *Doctor Zhivago* was most keen amongst Polish visitors who overwhelmingly requested “a free copy,” confirming the book’s somewhat paradoxical appeal in the country.⁵⁰

It is considered a “bore” in Poland—as one visitor put it—but everybody reads it for the mere fact that it was banned and that it was published in exile—which makes it even more definitely interesting: Of course this rather cynical comment is perhaps a little exaggerated, but generally speaking Polish readers expected more of a political load in this book.⁵¹

In addition to such Russian bestsellers as *Doctor Zhivago*, the Book Fund produced many other books that were unavailable inside Poland, including many canonical Western texts, and distributed them to visitors who dared smuggle them back to their home countries. This corpus

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Polonia Book Fund, Ltd. Person-to-Person Program, Monthly Report for October 1959. Publications Development Corporation, Operations Reports, 1959, Box 262, Folder 5, Sheet 1–7, Sheet 3. Also mentioned in a monthly report for November 1959. Ibid., Sheet 3. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Sheet 5.

⁵¹ Ibid.

represented ninety-five percent of the program's outputs.⁵² Polonia placed its books largely in the hands of intellectuals and professionals or groups of tourists.⁵³ Very unconventional modes of literary transfer were employed on British shores. Polonia learned that the largest group of beneficiaries were groups of sailors and fishermen from the 'Other Europe' who reached Scottish ports and happily received books to take back to their home countries, followed by students, and unusually large numbers of doctors.⁵⁴

Besides providing the opportunity to obtain literature during visitors' travels to the West, Polonia also provided interested readers with ways to get hold of uncensored literature inside the Soviet sphere. Literature that was published abroad and smuggled back into the country was best

obtained in second-hand bookshops or through traveling libraries. Among the books that—even in the mid-1980s—could only be obtained in used bookstores were Western bestsellers that were censored due to their anti-communist message. Western *tamizdat* publishing houses made great efforts in translating and publishing Western classics that were unavailable in the various Central and East European countries. For instance, George Orwell's novel *1984* was published by the Czech *tamizdat* publisher Index in Cologne. It also circulated secretly in various translations throughout the 'Other Europe.'

Richard Swartz, a Swedish correspondent in Central Europe, remembers one situation in a Budapest bookshop in particular, where

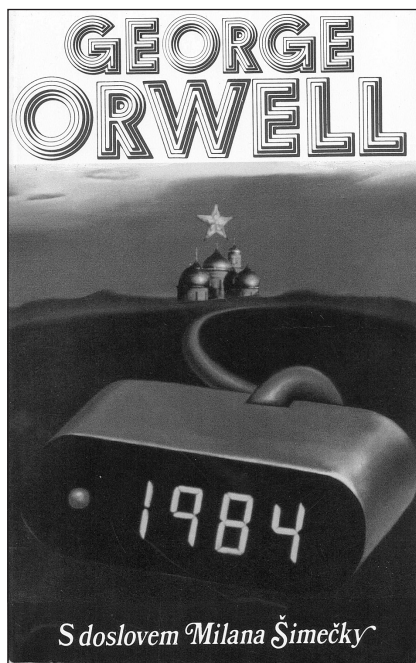


Figure 23: Cover of George Orwell, *1984*. Cologne: Index, 1984. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

⁵² Ibid., Sheet 1.

⁵³ Ibid., Sheet 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

I found George Orwell's *1984* by accident [...] There are other customers hunting for books around me: it seems almost impossible that they have not discovered the book, which is on the *Index* in Eastern Europe and which is perceived as ideological contraband. They must have seen it, but left it on the shelf. After a moment of hesitation I left it standing there. I had read it, and whom in present day Eastern Europe could I give it as a present, who could be interested in it in a different way than just as a kind of political pornography?⁵⁵

Being torn between his excitement about finding a critical Western novel in a second-hand bookshop and his disbelief that no other customer before him had purchased it, Swartz leaves the book in the shop. But arriving at his Hungarian friends' home, he is greeted with disbelief:

"You are a stupid idiot," my Hungarian friends say to me, when I tell them that I saw Orwell's *1984* in a second-hand bookshop in Vaci utca. "How can one have so little brain and leave such a book there?" Full of regret I returned to the shop that same afternoon with the idea to buy Orwell's novel, but I can't find it anymore. *1984* has vanished.⁵⁶

This anecdote shows how people hunted down censored Western books even into the late period of state socialism. However, going back to the origins of this marginally legal practice, the Polonia Book Fund was curious about the circulation of its own books in such second-hand bookshops. In 1959, its members recalled that antique and used book stores and "bric-a-brac" shops were the most popular places to buy banned authors "under the counter."⁵⁷ Correspondence about the Polonia Book Fund projects demonstrates that they were highly regarded by readers in Poland. As one university professor wrote in a letter from the same year:

it is important that you should keep up and develop your activity. I want to confirm what I told you about the 'mobile

⁵⁵ Swartz, "Organisierte Bequemlichkeit," 120.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Polonia Book Fund Ltd., Person-to-Person Program, Monthly Report for October 1959, December 8, 1959, Sheet 6.

libraries' with your literature, which are privately organized in the country. I know about two such libraries in Warsaw and one in Cracow and one in Lodz. The books are in motion. Your address is circulated among trusted people going to Paris as a source for obtaining more and new exile editions.⁵⁸

Becoming acquainted for the first time with literature produced in the underground but published abroad through the Book Fund, some readers expressed their excitement about the range and quality of the books published in exile. "I am so grateful to you," writes one reader, "for the opportunity of making full acquaintance with the publications which otherwise I would never have a chance to read. I am amazed by the astonishing publication effort in exile and the 'quality' of certain books. Those, which I have obtained from you will be treasured not only by myself, but by a wide circle of my trusted friends as well."⁵⁹ After it became clear to readers inside the Soviet sphere that they could receive otherwise unavailable literature through this mailing project, RFE and RL received more and more requests for Western books. A report entitled "Poland Looks to the U.S. for Books" that reached the Polish Institute in the United States declared that, following the ruination of libraries during the war and Cold War isolation, Polish academics, writers, and librarians exerted an immense demand for texts that exceeded the institute's ability.⁶⁰

Inspired by requests from 'captive people,' Free Europe Press established a mailing program of East-West contacts. This program served not only to circulate unavailable East European literature in the Soviet sphere, but also to transfer Western knowledge to its intellectuals. This was to be implemented by streaming broadcasts and by sending underground literature back into the countries of origin, in addition to sending out Western literature in foreign languages and translations. The literature that crossed the Iron Curtain in this way embraced a great variety of texts, including "good literature, reference books, art books, science books, and textbooks." The selection of texts was based on the degree to which they

⁵⁸ Ibid., Sheet 4.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ A. B. Czartoryski, "Poland Looks to U.S. for Books, Technical Knowledge," Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America received May 13, 1958, Books to Bela PIAS. Box 255, Folder 9, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

offered the “maximum political impact with a minimum of provocation.”⁶¹ RFE and RL wanted to keep their new audiences and readers in touch with the intellectual achievements of the ‘free world,’ and it appears they reached their goal. As a project summary from 1962 reads: “the mailing project has now reached a stage where it provide[s] practically all the intellectuals and institutions in Hungary and Poland, and important sections of the reading public in the other East European countries.”⁶²

RFE and RL were not identified as senders. Rather, individuals from the ‘free world’ sent packages of books to interested individuals or institutions located in the ‘captive nations’:

FEP has mailed into the three Baltic States and the five Satellite States [...] (books, journals, pamphlets, features) on every phase of free world life and thought. Most of these titles are mailed in the original English, French, or German [...] (as) such operation cannot be identified with Free Europe Committee, it has been necessary to persuade either the publishers of the matter mailed, or others to lend their names as the senders of this material.⁶³

A well-functioning network of Western senders gradually and successfully implemented the new mailing project which spanned public and private institutions across Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, France, England, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Altogether, their audience included approximately one hundred thousand individuals, including, predictably, intellectuals and writers, but also party officials.⁶⁴ By 1962, a group of roughly five hundred Western publishers were also central in distributing large amounts of books to institutions and individuals in the East.⁶⁵

A side effect of sending books either written by émigré Poles or published abroad was that underground writers were informed about their counterparts in the West. To know that there existed a large group of émigrés engaged in fighting suppression by the Polish government served as an incentive for underground activists to continue their resistance. It further contributed to their mutual understanding. A report from 1959

⁶¹ Mailing Project: A Summary, July 26, 1962, East West Contacts, Sheet 1.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “FEP Publications,” May 15, 1958, Sheet 5.

⁶⁴ Mailing Project: A Summary, 26 July 1962, East West Contacts, Sheet 1.

⁶⁵ Matthews, “The West’s Secret Marshall Plan for the Mind,” 13 (online).

describes how the book transfers created a “sensation” that revealed how many Polish satellite associations existed in the West.⁶⁶ After visitors obtained the books, the next problem was transporting them across the border. From a series of sources from the same year, it appears there were diverse estimations of the situation. One monthly report explains that the Polish customs were still rather unproblematic: “I have recently received 4 written confirmations from [...] recipients that all the books were transported safely to Poland. The customs examination is, generally speaking, quite superficial and there is no need to declare the possession of books.”⁶⁷ Others revealed that officials inside Poland had become aware of the large amount of uncensored overseas literature circulating in Poland. Polish intellectuals, for instance, told the Polonia Book Fund representative in Scotland that “the regime authorities are very concerned about the large quantity of anti-communist literature circulating in Poland,” which entered the country clandestinely; they speculated that customs officials “have received instructions to confiscate all literature from the luggage of persons traveling to Poland,” including “sailors of the ships returning to home ports.”⁶⁸ Despite these estimates, it is clear they were two sides of the same coin: while custom officers were initially unaware of these books’ relevance, the widespread circulation of texts kindled the authorities’ interest and instigated the increasing inspection of book packages at the borders.

The early Free Europe publishing initiatives pursued a strategy that RFE/RL continued to promote in the 1970s and 1980s. As Kristin Roth-Ey argues convincingly, “[i]t was the very fact of foreign broadcasting inside the USSR, and not the informational content of its programs, that spoke loudest of all.”⁶⁹ The audible presence of the enemy was seen as an invasion of the field of domestic politics. Still, the authorities could not do much against the demand of their audiences. Even if the Soviet Union and its neighboring states were successful in jamming independent broadcasting, RFE and RL bounced texts back into the Soviet Bloc:

⁶⁶ Polonia Book Fund, Person-To-Person Program, Monthly Report for November 1959, Publications Development Corporation, Operations Report 1959. Box 262, Folder 5, Sheet 3. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, 133.

[t]he electronic interference with Western radio transmissions [...] was always a stark reminder of two facts. First, that East European governments feared the specter of allowing their citizens unimpeded access to Western ideas and news, and secondly, it reminded the West that, in pursuit of this aim, East European governments were prepared to break international treaties and obligations.⁷⁰

People inside the Soviet sphere were keen to receive information unavailable to them. In addition, amongst widespread unverifiable gossip, Western radio broadcasts were used to disprove information about developments inside Eastern Europe and about the activities of various émigré groups. As outlined in a mission statement from 1982, RFE/RL—in contrast to the Voice Of America (VOA)—were neither meant to concentrate on “presenting U.S. Government policy and projecting American society,” nor to create “American radio in the sense of organized political opposition.”⁷¹ Instead, Washington created them in order to “project a diverse international awareness.”⁷² Based on this mission, these two radio stations played a particularly central role in the oral dissemination of *tamizdat* inside and outside the Soviet sphere. They were installed to broadcast first-hand sources from inside the Soviet Union and its satellites into the Eastern Bloc, and as such, to disseminate a new image of Europe.⁷³ Their special awareness of the great potential of the literary underground press was their driving force.

The term ‘satellite,’ used to describe the USSR’s Soviet-dominated neighbors, was often harshly criticized by the radios. Alexander W. Rudzinski, a Polish professor and émigré to the United States, argues in a 1954 report that “the word ‘satellite’ suggests a comparatively small attendant body like the moon revolving about a larger one like the earth.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Eyal, *The London Information Forum and Future Trends in East European Attitudes Toward International Radio Broadcasts*, June, 27 1989, 1–12, 6. HU OSA 300–8–3:101–6–46, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

⁷¹ “The Mission of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty Broadcast,” reproduced from the Board for International Broadcasting, Eighth Annual Report, 1982. Reprinted in Buell, “Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in the Mid 1980s,” 85.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

But this image no longer fits reality.”⁷⁴ This description subsumed the Soviet Union’s “small and weak neighbors to a dependent, obsequious, and servile role” within “the preponderant gravitational pull of the Soviet military and industrial potential and its vast manpower.”⁷⁵ He therefore suggests focusing on the gravitational power of satellites: “[e]ven though the moon revolves around the earth, it has its own orbit, which it is able to keep unchanged,” and maintains “its own immutable characteristic features.”⁷⁶ Strengthening the oppositions in the smaller Central European satellites would destabilize the almighty Soviet epicenter and thus it became a major aim of the stations.

Instead of simply broadcasting American or West European reports, the radios sent documents and texts into the ether that had originated inside the socialist states and which were perceived as mirroring the life and thoughts of its people. Indeed, the *Samizdat* Archives, RL’s material collection of its *samizdat* unit, proves the radio’s special awareness of the particular value of uncensored literary output for enabling a rapprochement of people on both sides of the Iron Curtain. *Samizdat* and *tamizdat* were considered valuable sources in RFE/RL’s “battle for the hearts and the minds.”⁷⁷ Reading *samizdat* texts in broadcasts enabled authors to reach a far broader and more varied (not to mention international) audience than the physical circulation of their texts could.⁷⁸ For this reason, these radio stations played a crucial role in spreading and publicizing *samizdat* and *tamizdat* on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The two antennas collected and guarded the (overwhelmingly positive) letters of listeners as magic treasures, using them to prove the efficiency and cultural supremacy of American radio (Cold War) culture.⁷⁹ Among the many sources was a letter to RL from November 15, 1976, that recounts the listening experience of a Vilnius engineer in his thirties shortly before his emigration to the West. He was introduced to RL during a summer vacation in the Lithuanian resort town Nida: “I got

⁷⁴ Rudzinski, “The Myth of Satellite Sovereignty,” April 26, 1954. HU OSA 300–8–314016: 46 Sheets, Sheet 2; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department. Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Sheet 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Sheet 2.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Radio Free Europe*.

⁷⁸ Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 170, 268, and Background Reports, Eastern Europe: The Myth of Satellite Sovereignty, Sheet 6–7.

⁷⁹ Vowinckel, Payk, and Lindenberger, *Cold War Cultures*.

fairly bored lying on the beach, so while my children were playing or swimming I listened constantly to the station. I don't like music much, so this station seemed right."⁸⁰ He further explains that "somehow the broadcasts drew an inner response from me and I was quite shaken up inside." His emotional reaction to the broadcasts was shared by others: "I was not the only one to be affected like this. My wife—a Russian and an Old Believer at that—never listens to the BBC, considering it simply a waste of time; but when we started tuning into Radio Liberty out on the sand dunes at Nida [...] we had an instantaneous reaction to every program, every sentence we heard, answering back, cursing, moaning, berating it. We were full of mental anguish, pain, and helplessness at what we heard."⁸¹ The engineer returned to Nida every summer just to listen to his Sharp receiver without it being jammed and to absorb the news of this "really Russian station, a station which said what we were thinking and feeling."⁸² He tries to grasp why he was drawn into this experience, pointing to the fact that "it was quite obvious that the people who made the broadcasts were very familiar with our way of life, our customs and difficulties, and above all with our hopes and aspirations."⁸³ To him, the familiarity with the broadcasters' way of thinking and his emotional reaction to the programs derived from the fact that Russian exiles composed and transmitted the messages. In his letter, he further remembers that after returning to Vilnius, he and his wife realized how absorbed they had been freely listening to the station in Nida.⁸⁴ A few months later, the couple decided to leave the Soviet Union and start a new life in the West.

Listening to the foreign broadcasts or, more precisely, to the voices of the stations' Central and East European émigré staff, actively impacted listeners. Some of them used the stations to learn as much as possible about the West in order to prepare for their emigration. Alekseevich Trushin, a twenty-five-year-old assistant movie director from

⁸⁰ "Engineer Believes Cooperation Between Various Emigrations Will Aid RL's Image." Questionnaires, Media and Opinion Research Department, Administrative Files, 1956–1994. HU OSA 300–6–1: 9, Sheet 1–3, Sheet 1. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Moscow who emigrated in April 1976, remembers listening to RFE/RL: "I listened to Western radio stations because I wanted to find out about the West [...] and at the same time prepare myself for emigration."⁸⁵

Although Soviet officials tried to jam independent radio news, the two stations largely succeeded in reaching their target audience in the 'Other Europe.' Eugeniusz Smolar, who had been working at the BBC for several years, perceived the activity of the radio stations as highly relevant in three ways: they informed the target country of developments inside its own society; they kept people informed about important events in other countries of the Soviet Bloc; and they presented news from the West. Smolar states that "the whole activity was an interlink between what happened in Poland, in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary." Western radio stations created a "circle of hope" that bound these countries into an orbit of communication.⁸⁶

Defining the role of RFE and RL vis-à-vis *samizdat* and *tamizdat* materials requires measuring the degree of priority given to *samizdat* in their broadcasting efforts, the fairness with which they handled this material, and the results of their networking activities. Among the radio stations that targeted the Soviet sphere during the Cold War, these antennas played a special role; from very early on they realized the importance of the literary underground press. The fact that they established one of the biggest *samizdat* archives proves their special awareness of *samizdat* literature's value in confronting the Western public with first-hand sources from inside the Soviet sphere.⁸⁷ As prototypical Western media that relied on the back-and-forth transmission of texts from a pool of *samizdat*, RFE and RL served as important mediators in the flow of information between the divided spheres. Gayle Durham Hollander describes Western reporters and foreign radio stations as "a 'transmission belt' to the larger world," which turned into an "extension of the domestic alternative

⁸⁵ "RL Listener Recounts Teen-Age Dissident Activities. 29th October 1976." Media and Opinion Research Department, Administrative Files, 1956–1994, Questionnaires 1960–1966. Special Panel Program Reviews 1964, HU OSA 300–6–1: 9, Sheet 1–2, Sheet 2. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

⁸⁶ Smolar, "From Memories to Legacies."

⁸⁷ Apart from such institutional archives, individuals such as Gordon Skilling "assembled at the University of Toronto a large *samizdat* library containing several hundred volumes". See Matejka, "Introduction to the Electronic Version of Cross Currents."

network, [...] ‘amplifying’ the activities and writings of the democratic movement.”⁸⁸ Gene Sosin similarly argues that foreign radio broadcasts were “a major factor in amplifying voices of dissent, encouraging this or that group to emulate others,” to be bolder and to act “as a partial restraint on regime repression.”⁸⁹ Besides, the radio’s ability to transmit *samizdat* material orally increased the impact on the listener. The personal tone of the individual stories was best captured when read aloud.⁹⁰ The well-known Hungarian broadcaster for RFE, George Urban, even claimed that “outside Poland, we were *the* natural outlet for *samizdat*.”⁹¹ Even if Soviet officials hoped to “curb widespread distribution of *samizdat*,” RL’s staff was convinced that the transmission of uncensored materials could not be stopped unless Soviet officials “can cut off the flow of such documents to the West.”⁹² If not, the body of literature that reached the West would only increase. Radio provided a truly influential link between the literary underground and the world of Western ideas and events.⁹³ Despite continuous jamming, Poles widely listened to RFE, RL, VOA, and the Polish Section of the BBC. These stations had a tremendous impact on millions of listeners throughout the country. The role of these institutions in linking the two worlds cannot be overestimated.

THE ECHO CHAMBER

Just as RFE and RL helped bounce *tamizdat* texts back into the Soviet sphere, they also provided a means of communication (so-called inter-communication) for citizens inside the Bloc. In 1971, Max Hayward labeled RFE and RL the “echo chamber”⁹⁴ and the “sounding board”⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Hollander, “Political Communication and Dissent,” 259–60. See also Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty*, 154–55; Urban, *Radio Free Europe*, 124–25; Michie, *Voices Through the Iron Curtain*.

⁸⁹ Sosin telex to Boiter and van der Rhoer cited in Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty*, 154–55.

⁹⁰ See Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*.

⁹¹ Urban, *Radio Free Europe*, 124.

⁹² Van der Rhoer, “Radio Liberty’s Present Uses of *Samizdat*,” 4–5.

⁹³ Cees Agent Minarik describes work for RFE, Statement to Press, 29 January 1976. Radomir Luza Papers, Box 134, Sheet 1–8, Sheet 7. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

⁹⁴ See Leo Labedz, “Opening Statements by Panelists,” Sheet 9.

⁹⁵ See Max Hayward, “Opening Statements by Panelists,” Sheet 15.

for *samizdat* material. Claude Angeli also estimates that the radio stations played a vital role in broadcasting the underground's voice back into the 'captive countries.' "In fact," he states, "there is hardly a Western medium of communication which finds such a great echo among the population of the Eastern Bloc as the two radio stations."⁹⁶ However, a 1970 article in *Le Nouvel Observateur* outlines the way RFE and RL served first and foremost the people inside the Bloc:

[d]ecidedly, they work hard at "Free Europe." The impact is not only a question of watts and transmitter [...] Because "Free Europe" is unique in its kind. It is five radio stations with something more to them. It is not only a fabulous enterprise spending many dollars and earning not one cent. It is not only journalists, specialists on the East, technicians, producers, disc jockeys and bureaus in a dozen countries. It is not only programs for farmers, housewives, intellectuals, or average citizens, and not only concerts and songs, the latest records on sale in Bucharest, Warsaw, or Budapest, or the latest "Beatles." For the listener in the East, "Free Europe" is both American radio and nation radio, ordinary radio and radio discreetly listened to, a radio-window toward the West, toward the USSR and the other socialist countries, and a radio-window toward his own country. Doubtlessly, no other station in the world, American or other, exercises such influence, direct or indirect, on the public opinion of five countries. "Free Europe" is a radio of combat, a "second power" to be reckoned with in Eastern Europe.⁹⁷

Andrei Sinyavsky provides a double perspective on the radio stations. First, as a one-time underground writer inside the Soviet Union, and afterwards, as a new émigré in France who reported for Radio Liberty from time to time:

⁹⁶ Article in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 22, 1970, cited in "West European Press Estimates of Radio Free Europe," Stefan Karbonski Papers, Box 4, Sheet 1–15, Sheet 3. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

⁹⁷ Article by Claude Angeli in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, January 12, 1970, cited in "West European Press Estimates of Radio Free Europe." Ibid., Sheet 1–2.

at the time of my arrest, during my confinement in a camp [1965–1971], and my subsequent release, right up to my departure to the West in 1973, I had numerous occasions of being convinced of the enormous and fundamental influence of Radio Liberty on the way of thinking and on the social and political climate in the Soviet Union. The Russians are practically deprived of any newspaper from the West. Under these conditions, Radio Liberty offers almost the only source of broad information—first and foremost on the internal life in Russia, about arrests and other forms of repression, the growth of non-conformist ideas, on the reaction of public opinion in the West about Russian affairs. In addition, this information becomes a form of pressure on government institutions in the Soviet Union, which reflects directly on the fate of so-called dissidents.⁹⁸

Aside from providing information, Sinyavsky refers to the possible political effect of news about imprisoned activists, citing his own personal experiences in prison. He writes that “I noticed that each time the campaign in my defense in the West was intensified and the news of this was broadcasted by Radio Liberty to Russia, my situation was alleviated.”⁹⁹ His personal experiences of the positive effects of Radio Liberty on writers inside the Soviet Union compelled him to speak through the same radio station to his colleagues and friends ‘over there’ after emigrating. He contends that the radio allowed “our voices” to reach friends in the USSR and that its activities were “becoming more and more necessary for the ideological liberation of the people living in the Soviet Union.”¹⁰⁰ Such reports framed *samizdat* texts as representations of the various topics that animated non-conformist writers. Understood in this way, the Western media considered it necessary to return the texts to the Eastern Bloc for continued dissemination and information. Here, Sinyavsky reiterates the general hope of RFE and RL to slowly break down the Soviet monopoly on ideas by using the languages and voices of the very people in those communist countries.

⁹⁸ “Letter by Andrei Sinyavsky to Mr. Mickelson,” Paris, January 10, 1976, Emigré Testimonials. Box 178, Folder 13. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

A Radio Study group report from 1967 evaluates the audience of RFE as unquestionably larger than that of the VOA “because so much of its material is of close personal interest to the listener,” and the broadcasts regularly dealt with “domestic events in close, intimate detail.” It was rightfully assumed that “Poles most wish to hear [...] something about themselves.”¹⁰¹ In order to perform this echo function, various types of radio shows were established that either used *samizdat* as a resource for reporting on developments inside the Soviet Bloc, or directly broadcast *samizdat* texts by such writers as Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, and Sinyavsky. Émigrés often read the literary works of their un-emigrated colleagues. The main broadcasting shows in 1971 were *Letters and Documents*, which presented original *samizdat* documents; *Unpublished Works of Soviet Authors*, which broadcast *samizdat* works; and the *Samizdat Review*, which covered non-conformist developments.¹⁰² RFE and RL filled six out of thirty-six hours of programming with *samizdat* material.¹⁰³ Although the radio stations were primarily interested in using *samizdat* for broadcasting, as a side effect they also began “functioning as a repository and distribution point for *samizdat* documents.”¹⁰⁴

Intellectual critiques of the broadcast texts were also an important part of the programs. The RFE radio show *Radio University*, which was launched in 1958, employed Western intellectuals to start “talking to East European elites” by providing lectures that were broadcast to communist countries.¹⁰⁵ In one of these broadcasts in March 1963, the British scholar of Russian history and literature Ronald Hingley analyzes *The Thaw* by Ilya Ehrenburg and Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*:

[i]f he [Solzhenitsyn] should continue to produce material of this class, and if other writers of comparable talent should arise,

¹⁰¹ William A. Boell, Jr. EUR/EE, and Stanislaw Skrzypek, USIA/IOP. Final Report—Polish Program Review Group. September 6, 1967. Radio Study Group Report, 9.8.1967. RG 59 General Records of the Department of State. Records Relating to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 1964–1972. Box 1, Sheet 1–6, Sheet 2. National Archives at College Park (NACP), College Park, MD in Washington.

¹⁰² See Albert Boiter, “Radio Liberty’s Present Uses of *Samizdat*,” in *The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects*, Sheet 3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Sheet 4.

¹⁰⁴ “Criteria for Duplicating Original Samizdat Documents (Draft),” February 4, 1972, Samizdat General 1972. Box 294, Folder 8, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹⁰⁵ Urban, *Talking to Eastern Europe*, 11.

it will at last be possible for western [sic] specialists in Soviet literature to switch their attention from the sociological and political aspects of their study, and turn to consider Soviet novels and stories in the way in which they should be principally considered: as work of art.¹⁰⁶

Art and literature—and not only political documents—attracted audiences among both the authorities and the non-conformist intellectual elite.

In order to present reliable information, the radios continuously sought original, unbiased materials from inside the Soviet Bloc. In 1972, the congressional research service of the Library of Congress commissioned a study on the effectiveness of the airwaves, which focused particularly on the role of *samizdat* broadcasts. Joseph G. Whelan elaborates the link between the emergence of *samizdat* and its reception through the radios. Due to the decreasing control over literature “the literary intelligentsia began to circulate among themselves and to foreign channels of communication (the press and radio), copies of manuscripts, appeals, open letters, and other protest literature.”¹⁰⁷ Whelan further explains that “*samizdat* as an embryonic expression of freely expressed public opinion” was “the beginning of a harvest after years of labor sowing the seeds of democracy” for Radio Liberty.¹⁰⁸ The radios helped trigger the emergence of *samizdat*, as well as being “prime disseminator[s].”¹⁰⁹ The research service came to the conclusion that “*Radio Liberty* is [...] a surrogate ‘Home Service’ to the Soviet people,” intended to establish a dialogue directly with the Soviet people, to fill the gaps created by Soviet censorship, to remove the distortions of Soviet propaganda, and to broadcast back to the Soviet people the thoughts and ideas of their own opposition.¹¹⁰ Indeed, Eugene Parta suggests that there existed “a high positive correlation between Western radio listening and attitudes and opinions that deviated from the official line in the USSR.”¹¹¹

A forty-eight-year-old German-Russian repatriate refers to the link between underground literature and its oral outlet: “*Radio Liberty* is important because of its broadcasts of Russian works published abroad

¹⁰⁶ Hingley, “Ehrenburg and Solzhenitsyn,” 167.

¹⁰⁷ Whelan, *Radio Liberty*, 167.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 167, 175.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 303.

¹¹¹ Eugene Parta, “The Audience to Western Broadcasts to the USSR,” 99–100.

and in *samizdat*: I remember a number of programs: readings from Solzhenitsyn, the Radio Journal, [Igor] Golomshktok's programs on art under totalitarianism."¹¹² Radios' oral medium was indeed very successful in creating an audience. "What I like most are the cultural programs and book reviews, they're popular and easy to understand," wrote a thirty-two-year-old white-collar worker from the Hungarian Bács-Kiskun county.¹¹³ Some circles inside the Soviet Bloc used the radios as replacement for the far riskier and more restricted use of *samizdat* literature. On April 27, 1976, Mikhail Delone, a twenty-three-year-old teacher from Moscow—"a September 1975 emigrant"—reports that he was especially "interested in listening to Western broadcasts because, for some reason, *samizdat* materials never seemed to get through to" him.¹¹⁴

The 1974 radio readings of *The Gulag Archipelago* almost turned into a public event, as the Russian dissident Natalya Gorbanevskaya recalls right after her migration to the West in February 1976: "[I]ast summer when the text of *Gulag Archipelago* was being broadcast; I was told that you could hear the broadcasts coming out of every window in Koktebel [...] Nobody was afraid."¹¹⁵ The power of Solzhenitsyn's works derived from the way they related to the experiences of many of the radio's listeners. Helena Gertsov, a Jewish teacher and translator in her

¹¹² Audience Research and Program Evaluation. German Andreev, August 31, 1976. HU OSA 300-6-1: 9. Media and Opinion Research Department, Administrative Files. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹¹³ "Quotes from Questionnaires," November and December 1968. February 1969. HU OSA 300-6-2, Box 3, 5. Media and Opinion Research Department, 1962-1994. East Europe Area and Opinion Research, 1962-1990. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹¹⁴ "Mikhail Delone Urges RL to Pay More Attention to Russian Nationalism." April 27, 1976. Questionnaires 1960-1966. Special Panel Program Reviews 1964. HU OSA 300-6-1: 9, Sheet 1-2, Sheet 2. Administrative Files, 1956-1994. Media and Opinion Research Department. East Europe Area and Opinion Research. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹¹⁵ "Natalya Gorbanevskaya Discusses Radio Liberty." February 20, 1976. Questionnaires 1960-1966. Special Panel Program Reviews 1964. HU OSA 300-6-1: 9, Sheet 1-5, Sheet 2. Media and Opinion Research Department. Administrative Files, 1956-1994. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

forties from Moscow, who also left the Soviet Union in February 1976, remembers that “when the programs came on, people in hundreds how he felt about apartments locked their doors and glued their ears to their radio sets. Many of these listeners were linked to the events related by Solzhenitsyn.”¹¹⁶ But when asked by a Western newsman in 1972 how he felt about his high profile in the West, Solzhenitsyn himself answered that “I would prefer to be published widely in my own country.”¹¹⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2, many dissidents considered it more important to publish in the underground than to gain a voice in the West. Still, the reality was that they often reached the public more widely through the radios and other media outlets in the West than through *samizdat*.

JAMMING (ON) THE AIRWAVES

Magnitizdat, the tape recordings of dissident materials and protest songs, also played a role in this dissemination, serving as “the primary mode of dissemination for all unofficial recordings: poetic recitation, novels read on tape, interviews.”¹¹⁸ It was used for recording RL broadcasts—Solzhenitsyn’s *First Circle* would have been a typical example—that were circulated among acquaintances.¹¹⁹ In this way, *magnitizdat* contributed to widening the stations’ audience.¹²⁰ Through this simultaneous multi-media dissemination, a number of works became key texts for the broadcasts. It is noteworthy that the popularity of certain East European works in the West affected the choice of texts aired in the Soviet Bloc. Among them were Andrei Amalrik’s *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?*, Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago*, and Solzhenitsyn’s *August 1914*. In addition to classical authors, the radio stations also transmitted letters, protests, and music.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ “RL’s Gulag Readings an Unprecedented Event, Says Recent Emigrant.” Questionnaires 1960–1966. Special Panel Program Reviews 1964, HU OSA 300–6–1:9, Sheet 1–2, Sheet 2. Media and Opinion Research Department. Administrative Files, 1956–1994. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹¹⁷ Kaiser, “Solzhenitsyn Speaks Out in Russia,” A1.

¹¹⁸ Daughtry, “Sonic Samizdat,” 34.

¹¹⁹ Whelan, *Radio Liberty*, 123.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 181.

Accessing *samizdat* materials, smuggling them across the Iron Curtain, editing them, and then broadcasting them back into the Soviet Bloc were part of a complex system of cross-Iron Curtain activities initiated by radio stations. These activities were very costly, however. Thus, from very early on, the stations constantly assessed their own performance. Even before 1971, when RFE and RL were still funded by the CIA, research about their actual audiences and output was an integral part of their own research. Allan A. Michie, the deputy head of the Munich headquarters, argued in 1969 that “[t]he best way to determine the effectiveness of any radio station is to talk to the people who listen to it. As long as the Iron Curtain stands between *RFE* and its audience, this is not possible.”¹²² While they could not conduct official research surveys, they developed their own techniques for estimating radio listening inside the Soviet Bloc.¹²³ They analyzed listener letters and interviewed refugees or travelers from Soviet Bloc countries to Western Europe. Letters to unidentified postal boxes throughout Western Europe were the “first evidence that the station’s voices were reaching their targets.”¹²⁴

East European visitor surveys, too,¹²⁵ were intended to measure the success of the “Flow of Information between East and West.”¹²⁶ In this document, the circulation of knowledge was linked to the distribution and availability of journals, magazines, books, and films, and to the exchange of journalists, researchers, students, and cultural programs, as well as to radio and television broadcasts. Negative accounts helped identify the stations’ main problems, and the collected materials documented the value and necessity of the radios’ (further) existence. A Christmas

¹²² Michie, *Voices Through the Iron Curtain*, 288.

¹²³ Among the most recent articles on audience research are those in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*.

¹²⁴ Michie, *Voices Through the Iron Curtain*, 289.

¹²⁵ “VOA and RFE Radio Listening in Poland: A Comparison.” RG 59 General Records of the Department of State. Records Relating to RFE/RL 1964–1972, Sheet 1–9, Sheet 8. National Archives at College Park (NACP), College Park, MD in Washington.

¹²⁶ “Questionnaire on the Flow of Information Between East and West for the Sub-Committee on the Free Flow of Information, The North Atlantic Assembly,” December 1974. Questionnaires, 1960–1966. Special Panel Program Review 1964. HU OSA 300–6–1: 9. Media and Opinion Research Department. Administrative Files, 1956–1994. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

1969 letter from a “Young Man” to the Hungarian department of RFE can be reduced to its core message: “[a] very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and all the staff of Radio Free Europe. I’ve been listening to many of your valuable programs for a long time.”¹²⁷

Apart from visitors, simple mail, and phone calls, the radio stations also profited from the storing ability of answering machines. Calling the radios and then talking to the people at RFE/RL, or leaving messages on answering machines took place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria from 1985. The radio staff invested significant energy and time in recording listener messages on their answering machines. When direct interaction with the radio staff was not possible, callers left messages and staff would transcribe the messages and store them as written sources to help evaluate the oral information. Listening to the radios and sending messages to the various country desks of RFE and RL in Munich represented a tangible, physical means of Cold War communication. Phone messages helped create immediate lines of communication between East and West.¹²⁸ A message from a Czechoslovak listener from October 1985 expresses the gratitude of a group of listeners, calling upon their “[r]espected friends” to “relay our most cordial thanks to the United States Congress, and also to the president of the U.S.A., for your station and especially for the news that we get here every day, and without which we don’t know how we would survive [...] We are very sad about the fact that when we call you something keeps interrupting and cutting the connection so that we can hardly talk to you like this.”¹²⁹ The socialist governments restricted and supervised not only people’s access to radios and

¹²⁷ “Listeners in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary telephone RFE/RL.” *Airways: a Bi-Monthly Publication for the Employees of RFE/RL*, no. 1 (January/February 1986): 3–5. HU OSA 300–8–1: 1. Publications Department. Airways. May 1984–October 1986. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹²⁸ “Telephone calls received between October 7–12, 1985.” HU OSA 300–30–29: 1, Sheet 1–9, Sheet 2. Telephone Calls to the Czechoslovak Desk, 1985–1986. Czechoslovak Unit. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹²⁹ “Telefonhívások XII”. Hungarian Service, October 7, 1985, Telefonhívások August–October 1985. HU OSA 300–40–14: 1. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

phones, but also their use of technical equipment. Listening to Western stations was forbidden and surrounded by secrecy; using phones to call Western countries was widely monitored, as phones were often bugged to prevent the exchange of unwanted information.

In a phone call to the radio stations in 1985, a Hungarian listener makes fun of the fact that he actually succeeded in calling through an official phone line:

[g]uys, if you knew where I am calling from, you would be extremely surprised. The point is that the Bolsheviks are paying for the phone. So first of all, congratulations to the fact that you put on such a show, which is hundred times better than the one of the Bolsheviks in Bródy Sándor street and which makes us stick to the loud-speaker. You just need to work on the quality of transmission.¹³⁰

While this caller did not have a problem reaching the station, he mentions the interruptions in the programs caused by jamming. Other callers used the answering machines to recite poems, tell stories, or simply ask for particularly rare consumer goods, such as propellers for their airplane models.¹³¹ Speaking, listening, reading, and writing across the Iron Curtain were ways of overcoming the communication divide. The original input from the socialist countries and the interpretation of their experiences exiles provided the basis of the broadcasts. A forty-two-year-old blacksmith from Poland stated in 1962 that he “listened to Radio Free Europe because it represents the interests of Poland; the broadcasts are imbued with a Polish spirit; it is a patriotic station.”¹³² A program review from 1967 argued that throughout the years RFE not only mir-

¹³⁰ Telephone Calls, Telefonhívások 87ik, Hungarian Service, March 25, 1985. HU OSA 300-40-14. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Hungarian Unit. Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² “The Impact and Effect of Regima Press and Radio Attacks Against RFE on Polish Respondents, September 1962.” HU OSA 300-6-2: 1, Sheet 1-5, Sheet 3. East Europe Area and Opinion research, Media and Opinion Research Department, July-Dec. 1962. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

rored the East European scene, but had become part of it.¹³³ Many of the messages explicitly address the issue of migration to the stations' exile staff. The exiles became mediators between the stations and their listeners. A Hungarian listener in 1969, for instance, passed on his "best wishes to my fellow countrymen at Radio Free Europe and all members of the staff working on the 'Musical Messages' program. Allow me to convey to you and your colleagues our sincere thanks and gratitude for this program in which you untiringly send messages to our relations."¹³⁴ Listeners held in high esteem the value of personal messages conveyed through the radios. They were otherwise often unable to keep in touch with relatives who had emigrated to the West.

Transmitting shows into the Soviet sphere was the stations' paramount concern at their inception. In the 1970s, however, projects developed that were directed at Western audiences. Spreading information and translated documents served not only the public in the East, but also its Western counterpart, which was interested in uncensored news. RFE and RL helped preserve this literature and accumulated an important collection of otherwise lost texts. Apart from collections of documents in the form of a *biblioteka samizdata* and the installation of archival repositories accessible to the academic community,¹³⁵ the stations' function lay in providing commentaries about *samizdat* texts.¹³⁶ In a letter dating from March 1971, the fateful year of the discovery of the CIA involvement with the radio stations, Albert Boiter, the director of research at RFE and RL, observed a change regarding Western interest in *samizdat* material. "It

¹³³ "Program Review. Introduction and Summary," in *Radio Study Group Report*, 9.8.1967. RG 59, Box 1, Sheet 1–2, Sheet 1. General Records of the Department of State. Records Relating to Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty 1964–1972. National Archives at College Park (NACP), College Park, MD in Washington.

¹³⁴ "Quotes from Hungarian Mail," January and February 1969, March 1969. From: Jan 1968 to Dec. 1969. Sheet 4. HU OSA 300–6–2: 3. Media and Opinion Research. East European Area and Opinion Research, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹³⁵ "Letter by Albert Boiter to Richard Pipes," March 16, 1971, *Samizdat General 1972*. Box 294, Folder 7, Sheet 1–21. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹³⁶ Memorandum from Gene Sosin to Albert Boiter, Subject: My Reactions to London Panelists Viewpoints on RL's Future Approach to *Samizdat*, May 28, 1971, *Samizdat 1972*. Box 294, Folder 8, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

is my impression from recent travels in France, UK, and Germany,” he writes, “that the *samizdat* phenomenon is on the verge of more systematic and even large-scale exploitation by many European research institutions. We at Radio Liberty are trying to keep abreast all these developments and to facilitate where we can the serious study of the Soviet dissident movement.”¹³⁷

The new strategy paid more attention to the Western intellectual sphere, which needed to be educated about developments inside *samizdat*:

“Radio liberty *samizdat* service” is being inaugurated in order to provide an easily-accessible and systematic means by which Radio Liberty can share with interested scholars, journalists, libraries, research institutions, etc. the original-language texts of all new *samizdat* material which comes into its possession in return for the cost of duplication and postage.¹³⁸

During a conference in the same year entitled Dissent in the Soviet Union¹³⁹ Karl van het Reve indicated that the Western scholarly community’s new interest in the alternative voices of Russia was “slowly awakening to the fact that besides and behind the official Russia there is another Russia, more interesting perhaps than the official Russia.”¹⁴⁰ Sovietologists in particular began to realize that “it is more important and certainly more interesting to read the *Khronika* than to read *Pravda*.”¹⁴¹

Albert Parry, a professor of Russian language and civilization and the founder of the Department of Russian Studies at Colgate University, realized the changing availability of *samizdat* in the West in 1970,

¹³⁷ “Letter by Albert Boiter to Richard Pipes,” March 16, 1971.

¹³⁸ Announcing the Inauguration of the Radio Liberty Samizdat Service (Draft), Samizdat General 1972. Box 294, Folder 7, Sheet 1–2, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹³⁹ The conference took place between October 22–23, and was organized by the “Interdepartmental Committee on Communist and East European Affairs.” Historical File (Provisional), Box 14, Folder Samizdat 1971. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹⁴⁰ Van het Reve, speech given at “London Panel Discussion on Samizdat and Dissent,” Sheet 4.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Sheet 5.

stressing the former unavailability of *samizdat* for Western scholars: “[a] Western Sovietologist cannot study *samizdat* on the spot. The KGB would quickly net him.”¹⁴² At the same time, he emphasizes the availability of alternative channels to receive the material, noting that “comprehensive channels of information do thrive between *samizdat* and its Western sympathizers.”¹⁴³ Parry relates his many recent travels to Western centers of *samizdat* collections including London, Munich, Paris, Zagreb, Belgrade and New York, and elaborates his extensive findings. Key figures in the West piled files “of the most diverse underground publications” before him, and “[f]acts, rumors, personal experiences, ideologies were offered by old Western hands in Kremlinology and the latest Russian *perebezhchiki* (‘crossers-over,’ as defectors call themselves).”¹⁴⁴ Based on the newly available uncensored materials from the Soviet Bloc, it became far easier for scholars like Parry to produce critical scholarly writings on the situation inside the sphere.

Their easy access was critically viewed by some. Van het Reve questioned his Western listeners by comparing the all-daring attitude of Soviet underground writers and activists to Western scholars’ meager engagement. He accused them of complacency, saying that “most of you when asked to bring a printed copy of one of his [Solzhenitsyn’s] books to a certain address in Moscow or Kiev, or to bring the manuscript of another of his books from Leningrad to Toronto, would refuse to do this,” while “the thought that a man should not be able to print a book in Paris if he chooses to do so awakens in them certain instincts that make them do both these things.”¹⁴⁵ His comment conveys the underlying aim of such conferences at the time, namely the hope of gaining support from Western scholars for underground writers and their fight for the freedom of speech.

A range of Sovietologists and experts on Eastern Europe additionally followed suit, hoping to establish a regular journal for the English-speaking academic reader. The journal, entitled simply *Samizdat*, had an international advisory board of notable scholars, and published translated documents and analytical essays. The journal’s main aim would be “to present quickly, but on a basis of high academic standards the most

¹⁴² Parry, “Samizdat Is Russia’s Underground Press,” 249.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Van het Reve, speech given at “London Panel Discussion on Samizdat and Dissent.”

important current *samizdat* documents to the English reader.”¹⁴⁶ During a similar conference organized by RFE and RL in London in 1971, *The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects*, academics and radio employees debated future approaches to *samizdat* materials (especially the new attention the Western intellectual sphere paid to it), while Western scholars discussed the quality and the intellectual sophistication of *samizdat* materials. Once removed from their historical and cultural context, *samizdat* texts, they argued, lost much of their original quality. In addition, most of the literature was, at least initially, not meant to appear abroad; nor was it written with the Western reader in mind. Some scholars argued that the Western reader could only become truly involved when the material was addressed to institutions and individuals abroad. Albert Boiter considered this the so-called other dimension of *samizdat*. “Only in the last few years,” he stated, “has it occurred to many Soviet authors of *samizdat* that by sending copies of their work abroad, where it can be published and attract international attention, they can add an extra dimension which may be helpful to their particular causes.”¹⁴⁷

Since much of *samizdat* dealt with the internal problems of Soviet society and was shaped by a Soviet frame of reference, the texts’ transmission contained gaps. These cultural miscommunications of *samizdat*, when read outside of their place of origin, illuminate *tamizdat*’s structural weakness. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the West underground texts were often only read for their political message. Even if many authors stressed the literary character of their books, Western readers frequently limited their attention only to those books that symbolized monuments of illegal literary activities. The American literary scholar Joseph Benatov describes the utilization of *tamizdat* as “mental shorthand for interpreting the larger Eastern European socialist experience.”¹⁴⁸ Benatov addresses the possible negative consequences that the cultural translation of *samizdat* into *tamizdat* could have on the original text. While *samizdat* texts were produced in illegal spheres, their

¹⁴⁶ Peter Reddaway, *Approximate Plans for Future Publishing of Samizdat*, June 28, 1971, Samizdat General 1972. Box 294, Folder 7, Sheet 1–2, Sheet 2. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹⁴⁷ Boiter, “Samizdat: Primary Source Material in the Study of Current Soviet Affairs.”

¹⁴⁸ Benatov, “Demystifying the Logic of Tamizdat,” 109.

exposure to a Western public often resulted in the exclusive reading of *tamizdat* texts for their political subtexts.

These issues came to the fore during the Cold War. In 1971, an article in the *Samizdat Bulletin* entitled “The Problem of *Samizdat*” points out that “[c]onsiderably less is known about the other side of the coin—the difficulties and problems” connected with the growth of *samizdat*.¹⁴⁹ At the 1971 The Future of *Samizdat* conference mentioned above, Leopold Labedz, a Polish-British scholar of Russian studies, was convinced that reading literature outside its country of origin caused misunderstandings. In an opening statement concerning the future of *samizdat* publications he claims that “the presentation of *samizdat* in the West” caused far greater problems than that of transferring the material back into the Soviet Bloc. The West could fulfill its “echo chamber” function which would be more “adequate because, after all, it bounces back into the same kind of milieu and to the audience which is producing it.”¹⁵⁰ He argues that once most of the documents were transferred to the West and disseminated in academia they had little to offer intellectual debates in the West. Labedz states that “only those Soviet *samizdat* documents which are able to stand up to a free and open discussion without looking primitive or unsophisticated” would be valuable. *Samizdat* documents may have been politically significant, but once removed from the historical and cultural context of the Soviet Union they lose their “intellectual significance.”¹⁵¹

Leonard Schapiro, on the other hand, was convinced that the unspoiled, unconventional character of these documents conveyed previously unknown knowledge from a region of Europe otherwise represented only in the official Soviet press. “There is a tremendous force behind publishing the ordinary, naïve, unknown, unimportant chap,” he says, “[h]e may be unimportant intellectually, but he is important because the strength of these things, the movement or whatever it is, is the strength of the hydra: if you cut off one head another one grows.”¹⁵² Although passing over the texts’ intellectual value, Schapiro throws into relief the importance of *samizdat*’s physical appearance in the West. The

¹⁴⁹ “The Problems of *Samizdat*: The Role of *Samizdat* in Contemporary Soviet Life,” *The Samizdat Bulletin*, no. 43 (November 1976), S. 1–7, 1.

¹⁵⁰ Leopold Labedz, “Opening Statements by Panelists,” in *The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects*, Sheet 10.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Leonard Schapiro, “Opening Statements by Panelists,” Sheet 11.

texts had an emotional impact on the Western reader that transcended their intellectual quality. He contends they provided a “sense of confidence” that “you are not alone, that there are lots of people around you,” that you are “not just going to be bumped off in a cellar.” This creates the feeling that although they may have jailed you there is nevertheless “a voice somewhere which recognizes me.” And “even if I come out with something which intellectually is not Solzhenitsyn,” what is written is “something that people take account of.”¹⁵³

Max Hayward intimately recounts his experiences during 1959 and 1960 when reading the early *samizdat* piece *A Voice from Russia*, published in *The Sunday Times*. “[I]t was enormously impressive,” he says, “because it was one of the first indications that there were people there, who had preserved the capacity to scream. One had a feeling at one time that perhaps the Soviet people had been somehow totally crippled, reduced to muteness, perhaps forever. How did we know that the contrary was the case except through these pathetic (as we now read them) voices?”¹⁵⁴ Reading the text gives Hayward a personal understanding of this literature’s psychological function, which he warned others not to underestimate: “[t]hey started off by screaming, which was a therapeutic thing. A nightmare was coming to an end and you screamed as you startled yourself out of your sleep. This is what happened after Stalin’s death.”¹⁵⁵

Apart from informing Western readers about developments inside the Bloc, *samizdat* also highlighted the emergence of a well-functioning, reliable network of agents. Peter Reddaway recalls the “remarkable network” of “*samizdat* correspondents” in the Soviet Union, a network that “is a strong one because it is serviced, it is operated, by people who have very little to lose [...] and who are willing to run great risks to operate the *samizdat* network.”¹⁵⁶ The West valued *samizdat* primarily for its social activism, and for a long time ignored its actual contents. Nevertheless, it introduced new communicative channels that produced a transnational intellectual community meant to develop an East-West détente. This détente was first and foremost dedicated to the concept of “building bridges” between the people on both sides of the divide,¹⁵⁷ pro-

¹⁵³ Max Hayward, “Opening Statements by Panelists,” Sheet 11.

¹⁵⁴ Labedz, “Opening Statements by Panelists,” Sheet 10.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Reddaway, “Speech Given During the Conference,” Sheet 3–4.

¹⁵⁷ In Support of H.R. 9637. Ibid., Sheet 8.

viding a freer “flow of information and ideas” in Europe,¹⁵⁸ or serving as “gateways to a world-wide process of communication.”¹⁵⁹

DÉTENTE AND GLASNOST

The double function of RFE and RL depended greatly on collaborators who could combine their familiarity with the Soviet context with their knowledge of the Western intellectual scene. Without this, Labedz argues, the two worlds would have remained apart.¹⁶⁰ Herein we can see the high value of RFE’s and RL’s social activism. The early 1970s witnessed the increasing importance of détente. These two radio stations were aimed, in accordance with the Helsinki Accords, to facilitate the free flow of information and *glasnost*—‘openness’ or ‘publicity’—at the two radio stations. These leitmotifs, however, laid the foundation for all *samizdat* activity.¹⁶¹ In this respect, the plea for *glasnost* in literary circles on both sides of the Iron Curtain long predated Mikhail Gorbachev’s push for reciprocity. The overall aim was to counteract the censored stream of information that was the most significant line dividing the blocs. In 1987, Gorbachev addressed the danger of the division of a historically connected European culture:

[w]hen I let the panorama of these sorely afflicted countries pass before my eyes and thought about the common roots of this diverse but at its core common European culture, I became aware of the artificiality and the temporariness of the current bloc confrontation and the antiquated imagination of an “Iron Curtain.” Possibly in this way the idea of a common European home crossed my mind.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ “Resolution (Radio Free Europe),” New York, November 16, 1971, American Newspaper Guild of New York. Box 143, Folder 12, Sheet 1–2. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹⁵⁹ “Free News for Unfree Countries,” in *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, June 20, 1970, cited in “West European Press estimates of Radio Free Europe,” *ibid.*, Sheet 12.

¹⁶⁰ Labedz, “Opening Statements by Panelists,” Sheet 10.

¹⁶¹ Boiter, “Samizdat: Primary Source Material in the Study of Current Soviet Affairs,” Sheet 7.

¹⁶² Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 253. Translation from German by author.

Apart from the central spokesmen of *glasnost* who demanded official rapprochement between the countries of Eastern and Western Europe, less official institutions also questioned the continent's cultural division. The Council for a Free Czechoslovakia was specifically engaged in improving cultural relations between the United States and Czechoslovakia. However, its members were aware that better relations were only possible through pursuing the cultural reunification of Europe:

[t]he American long-term interest in Europe will be best served when the dividing line between the Western and the Eastern parts of the Continent is removed or at least reduced to practical insignificance. The principal source of Europe's malady which so profoundly affects the United States lies in the suppression of fundamental freedoms in the East [...] It is in the interest of the United States and the Western democracies that Central and Eastern Europe should not remain buried under a twentieth-century version of the Peace of Westphalia.¹⁶³

Better communication and an intensified flow of information increasingly became part of the Western policy of *détente* that started to take shape in the early 1970s.

When in 1971 the public learned that the CIA was a primary sponsor of RFE and RL, the dilemma about the secret governmental funding of seemingly independent cultural projects spilled out into the open, producing an intense debate about the 'amoral' entanglement of the radio stations with governmental policies that directly threatened the stations' existence. In this context, Hugh Wilford states that "the CIA could not always predict or control the actions of the musicians, writers, and artists it secretly patronized."¹⁶⁴ At the same time, however, various hearings took place before the American Committee on Foreign Relations of the US House of Representatives. Former activists and employees were questioned about their estimates of the necessity of financing institutions like RFE and RL through governmental funding.

¹⁶³ Council of Free Czechoslovakia, A Memorandum on the United States Policy towards Czechoslovakia, New York, May 20, 1981. Radomir Luza Papers, Box 134, Sheet 1–8, Sheet 3. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹⁶⁴ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 113.

John Grnouski, a former American ambassador to Poland between 1965–1968, recalls his activities in Poland and speaks in favor of the exchanges brought about by the radio stations. “[D]uring my tenure as ambassador to Poland,” he says, “I have been a vigorous advocate of an expansion of cultural, scientific, and technological exchanges, and the encouragement through financial support and policy enunciations of a free flow of” people, texts, and information between the United States and Eastern Europe.¹⁶⁵ The liquidation of the radio stations would be interpreted by people behind the Iron Curtain as the “final recognition by the United States of the present status quo and of the permanency of the Soviet rule in East Europe.”¹⁶⁶ Throughout his career, Grnouski argued that he had been among those who urged the American government to adopt policies aimed at developing a climate of *détente*. He enthusiastically advocated the prolongation of the governmental funding of RFE and RL:

these instruments of international communication, by providing the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union with an awareness of ideas and information which otherwise would not be available to them, play a creative role in advancing the political objective of East-West *détente*. [...] High on the list is the communication of ideas and information which generates the comparison, discussion and debate among a nation’s citizens and between citizens of nations, whose governments are at odds.¹⁶⁷

If services were to be discontinued, the processes that had started to inform people in the Soviet Bloc would cease, along with slowly emerging trans-Iron Curtain communication channels. While books, journals, and newspapers were significant, they could never reach the same amount of people as broadcasts.¹⁶⁸

Broadcasts served as a particularly effective means of deconstructing Europe’s divided literary spheres. Transferring literature physically

¹⁶⁵ “In Support of H.R. 9637.” Statement Presented before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States House of Representatives by John A. Grnouski, 10 A.M., Tuesday, September 14, 1971. Stefan Karbonski Papers, Box 4, Sheet 1–9, Sheet 8. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Sheet 8.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Sheet 3.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Sheet 6–7.

between East and West symbolized a first, practical step reconnecting the literary communities. RFE and RL initiated person-to-person projects and engaged a wide variety of 'carrier pigeons' for smuggling literature out of the Soviet Bloc and back, breaking down the divide. As official broadcasting institutions, the stations represented an important nucleus of Western intellectuals and émigrés from the 'Other Europe.' Similar to the Committee for the Free World, which was composed of a high-ranking mixture of Western intellectuals and émigrés,¹⁶⁹ RFE and RL had well-known intellectuals in its ranks, who were not just following the policies of the broadcasters.¹⁷⁰

SMUGGLING ACROSS THE IRON CURTAIN

From couriers and carrier pigeons to interlibrary loans, methods ranging from the predictable to the outlandish were employed to smuggle literary material across the Iron Curtain. Most often it involved people, but there were also channels that circumvented the postal censorship to send material abroad. LPs, cassettes, and videos were used to send the material to countries where it could be printed and disseminated. Cultural middlemen had to operate everywhere to achieve these aims. They established contacts with authors, smuggled bags filled with forbidden books, and reached out to Western publishers. This literary transfer involved an advanced social practice of organized smuggling from and to the West, as well as the circulation of uncensored texts in the Western cultural sphere. *Samizdat* and *tamizdat* involved a great number of individuals and were highly intertwined and interdependent.

Tamizdat would not have emerged without illegal social activity inside the 'Other Europe.' Producing and circulating *samizdat* provided insiders with the know-how to smuggle literature into the West. As such, social practices that involved the consumption of *samizdat* were a kind of *tamizdat* training. Yasushev argues that due to the "high level

¹⁶⁹ Among them were intellectuals such as Saul Bellow, Francois Bondy, Leszek Kołakowski, Hilton Kramer, Irving Kristol, Melvin J. Lasky, Norman Podhoretz, Joseph Brodsky, Milovan Đilas, Francois Fejtő, Vladimir Maximov, Mihajlo Mihalov, György Schöpflin, and Peter Reddaway.

¹⁷⁰ List found among the unsorted Radomir Luza Papers. Ibid., Box 134. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

of activity, both in terms of volume and extensiveness and, most important, in terms of regularity,” *samizdat* developed into more than a minor national phenomenon. As with *tamizdat*, it gained a transnational dimension.¹⁷¹ Jiřina Šiklová considers the social function of literary circulation both within countries and across borders as the core element of community building. “*Samizdat* and *tamizdat* played a very important social role because it was not only the information but the courage to give, to lend, to borrow the book or typed papers,” she says. “Without *samizdat* and *tamizdat*, I think there would be a bigger loss of identity for these different cultures.”¹⁷²

Samizdat’s social component, which manifested itself in the modes of its material production and spontaneous dissemination, is important here. Gordon Skilling describes *samizdat*’s production as a step back to less advanced methods, resembling in many ways the pre-Gutenberg era.¹⁷³ In this sense, *samizdat* activity could even be perceived as continuing the traditions of monastic bookmaking. The production itself was based on a cycle. After the manuscript had been produced, the author or a friend brought it to a typist where it would be typed, copied, and passed around among interested readers who were obliged to duplicate their own copies and further circulate them. Thus, while the publication and distribution of books to readers normally represent separate processes, here they “became one.”¹⁷⁴ The manuscripts traveled through a number of trusted channels without the medium of a publishing house or the permission of the authorities. Julius Telesin describes the mechanism of *samizdat* production as follows:

[w]hat became important was not that “I publish myself” but that “I myself do the publishing”—not necessarily of my own work, but of my own free will, without begging for anyone’s permission. I “publish” means that I prepare a text by the method available to me, naturally without using a printing press, since printing presses in our most democratic society “belong to the people.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Yakushev, “The *Samizdat* Movement in the USSR,” 188.

¹⁷² Šiklová, “From Memories to Legacies.”

¹⁷³ Skilling, “*Samizdat*: A Return to the Pre-Gutenberg Era?,” 11, and Komaromi, “*Samizdat* as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon.”

¹⁷⁴ Yakushev, “The *Samizdat* Movement in the USSR,” 188.

¹⁷⁵ Telesin, “Inside ‘*Samizdat*,’” 25.

The mediation of the written texts depended entirely on the reader's interest and the author's reputation. If a literary piece was of little value to a readership or seemed unworthy of being reproduced, a *samizdat* text would never be widely disseminated. These texts were condemned to the desk drawer, falling into oblivion. Just like in other media spheres, the circulation of *samizdat* went hand in hand with the goodwill of its material producers and reproducers, who functioned as literary gatekeepers. Because it was a network with its own dynamics and rules, an author whose texts did not spark the interest of the community would simply never become part of it. Thus, even in the field of *samizdat*, forms of censorship shaped its output. However, those authors whose texts became real *samizdat* bestsellers potentially gained an international readership and publicity (in the underground). One of the most important elements of *samizdat*, then, was its potential as a social activity, which engaged many different literary figures simultaneously.

The involvement of many participants in the production and distribution of *samizdat* strengthened the collective identity of non-conformist writers. The common practice of typing, printing, and copying created forms of sociability. By circulating exclusively among a private and restricted audience, Sofia Tchouikina argues, the simple method of *samizdat* had one unassailable virtue: "[i]t developed a feeling of participation and cohesiveness in its readers and created an audience of readers, who were at the same time co-workers in the publishing effort."¹⁷⁶ Yakushev evaluates the relevance of *samizdat* in particular for its lasting potential as a social activity: "the present movement may well be remembered not so much for the political ideas and ideals, intentions and goals it attempted to popularize, but rather for the simple and effective method it developed for their propagation and distribution."¹⁷⁷ In particular, the physical and intellectual fluctuation of the uncensored texts conditioned the emergence of the community. As Robert Darnton has argued, the social practice of underground publishing can be described as a community project that would not have been realized without the contribution and participation of a multitude of literary figures: "[b]ooks had to pass through many hands—smugglers, shipping agents, wagoners, retailers—before they reached the readers."¹⁷⁸ His detailed description of

¹⁷⁶ Tchouikina, "Anti-Soviet Biographies," 134.

¹⁷⁷ Yakushev, "The *Samizdat* Movement in the USSR," 187.

¹⁷⁸ Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 15–16.

the complex system of illegal channels through which the bestselling texts of the Ancien Régime flowed reveals parallels to the practice of literary transfers during the Cold War. In both cases, censorship and restrictions pushed the activity into the underground, into areas of secrecy and disobedience. But this shared knowledge of participation in a social and secretive activity was a core element that bound members of the community together. From these common acts of resistance, individuals gained the feeling of belonging to a community.

WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND SAMIZDAT

Writing and typing *samizdat* remained lonesome activities to a large extent. But its printing, duplication, circulation, and reading were particularly social activities that led to the creation of a tangible network. *Samizdat* production was also a male-dominated activity. But women's sense of the importance of personal contact and their continuous efforts to cultivate relationships established close ties between a great number of activists. As they linked the core centers of uncensored activities, they played an eminent role in maintaining the social aspect of *samizdat*.¹⁷⁹ In turn, women's social skills were crucial in establishing and maintaining the community. They typed manuscripts at night and helped circulate the material among their friends. Many of the women used their inconspicuous shopping bags or handbags to smuggle large amounts of leaflets or copies from a site of *samizdat* production to a space where material would be collated and distributed. In 1969, the Russian Irina Belgorodskaya was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for anti-Soviet activities after "her handbag, containing 60 copies of a letter protesting the arrest of a political dissident, had been found in a Moscow taxicab."¹⁸⁰ Smuggling became an important facet of the trade, creating and maintaining cross-border connections that relied on personal contact between the network's participants. Thus, even if they were often predominantly typists, carrier pigeons, or *Laufburschen* [errand boys/girls], women used the literary underground as a means to put their social skills into practice.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Kanturková, *Verbotene Bürger*; Penn, *Solidarity's Secret*; Grudzińska-Gross, *The Art of Solidarity*; Zaborowska, *How We Found America*.

¹⁸⁰ Kamm, "Soviet Jails Woman Dissident," 13.

¹⁸¹ Spiritova, "Ich Habe Bieber Gedient als zu Schreiben," 117.

Only a few succeeded in becoming writers, poets, or essayists. Although women often earned prominence only after their famous dissident husbands had been imprisoned, sent to the Gulag, or exiled to the West, these women took over important mediating functions.¹⁸² After the famous Russian poet Osip Mandelstam died in a camp in 1938, his wife Nadezhda Mandelstam memorized most of her husband's poetic works and waited to release them for *samizdat* circulation until the 1960s (they officially appeared in the West in the 1970s). Nadezhda also arranged for the English-language translation of two memoirs, *Hope Against Hope* (1970) and *Hope Abandoned* (1974) by Max Hayward, the translator of *Doctor Zhivago*.¹⁸³

As the physical production and the reception of *samizdat* involved the same private circles of people and took place in the framework of people's private lives, it represented a completely self-made endeavor.¹⁸⁴ It became a private 'home-work,' made by various circles, the so-called *kompanii* [formal work groups].¹⁸⁵ Due to the significant work that went into *samizdat*'s production, manuscripts gained an immense value and popularity. These home-made books became private treasures, and, "concealed in attics and in various absurd hiding places, they are passed secretly from hand to hand. Some of them are in safes, secured with ridiculous bits of string and plasticine. Some of them have been paid for dearly, by imprisonment, humiliation, and anxiety."¹⁸⁶ This peculiar social dimension of the *samizdat* movement fascinated Western audiences:

[i]nside the USSR the term *samizdat* is applied most frequently to denote the process, the mechanisms, or the techniques by which written matter is reproduced and distributed by individuals. Zhores Medvedev [...] calls it a "chain-reaction process" [...] According to this view, the element of "circulation" is crucial, if the material doesn't go through the process of repro-

¹⁸² For instance Raissa Orlowa-Kopelev (wife of Lev Kopelev), Elżbieta Ledererová (wife of Jiří Lederer), Anna Šabatová (wife of Jaroslav Šabata), and Zuzana Dienstbierová (wife of Jiří Dienstbier).

¹⁸³ Mandelstam, *Hope Against Hope*. On the gendered aspect of the memoirs, see Robey, "Gender and the Autobiographical Project," 233.

¹⁸⁴ Yakushev, "The *Samizdat* Movement in the USSR," 189.

¹⁸⁵ Stephan, "Von 'Dissidenten', 'Ehefrauen' und 'Sympathisantinnen,'" 126.

¹⁸⁶ Skilling, "Samizdat: A Return to the Pre-Gutenberg Era?," 13.

duction and distribution in a network of nameless third parties it is not *samizdat*.¹⁸⁷

Nevertheless, despite harassment and persecution, *samizdat* production seldom ceased for long. Authors and producers acted with caution. Apart from using kitchens for private conversations and *samizdat* readings, they used private homes as hiding places for manuscripts or to carry out clandestine activities such as printing and copying materials. A double-bottom below a kitchen floor or a garden flowerbed served as potential hiding places for forbidden manuscripts. Vera Loboda, the wife of the Russian writer Vasily Grossman, hid her husband's novel *Zhizn' i sud'ba: roman (Life and Fate)* in a little crawl space underneath the kitchen floor until it could finally be smuggled to the West. Loboda recounts her plight in the 1994 documentary *The Tamizdat Connection*: "It was autumn, November 6. The anniversary of my husband's death. And here I had potatoes. I was hiding the bag under the potatoes. And then the militiamen hammered against the door, but I did not move. The lock opened and they came in."¹⁸⁸ Loboda managed to distract the invaders' attention with some bottles of alcohol, which interested them more than the book she was hiding. Her personal anecdote indicates that the home's privacy had the virtue of helping to preserve the physical survival of a text. Sometimes, however, it could have fatal consequences for the manuscript when it had to be left in its private hiding place and was forgotten or lost.

Kitchens, gardens, and bathrooms were important places for the production and reproduction of *samizdat*. As "[a]nybody printing anything, even a visiting card, without the written permission of the censor," was, as van het Reve observed in 1970, "liable to be condemned to hard labor," the photographic printing and reproduction of *samizdat* took place only in the most private and secretive places,¹⁸⁹ such as bathrooms temporarily converted into laboratories. Andrei Sakharov's wife, Jelena Bonner, explains how they converted their bathroom into a dark room in order to copy Grossmann's novel for transportation to the West:

¹⁸⁷ Boiter, "Samizdat: Primary Source Material in the Study of Current Soviet Affairs," Sheet 3.

¹⁸⁸ Cited in Billstein, *Die Tamizdat-Connection*. Translation from German by author.

¹⁸⁹ Van het Reve, "Samizdat," 21.

[h]ere is the bathroom. Here it was covered with a wool blanket. Here we had a second blanket which was nailed to the door so that no light could come in when the door was opened. On the bathtub a wood piece was lying, on which the developers were lying, and here the films were hanging. The water was running as cooling water. That was the whole technique. All very simple. [...] That was the photo laboratory.¹⁹⁰

With time, production methods became more advanced and elaborate. While *samizdat* production in Czechoslovakia confined itself largely to “the typewritten production of carbon copies,”¹⁹¹ in Poland professional methods of duplication such as real printing and Xeroxing were employed. The dangers involved in the circulation of uncensored literature made it necessary to cover tracks carefully, preventing the traceability of links between authors, *samizdat* producers, and publishers. Therefore, often unknown middlemen mediated the textual material, so that authors would not know who had typed, copied, or smuggled their literature. This procedure was meant to avoid the accumulation of knowledge about the distribution network, helping to ensure its continuous existence. If imprisoned or interrogated, individual members of the network could not be forced to reveal the complex system of literary production and circulation.

In contrast to the secrecy surrounding the process of *samizdat* distribution, public readings regularly turned into social events. During these readings a book was either recited or divided into pieces and read consecutively. As many *samizdat* texts were simply composed of loose papers, they could be easily spread among a group of interested readers. Julius Telesin gave one of the earliest insights into the community-building character of *samizdat* in 1973, describing the joint reading practice of *samizdat*.¹⁹²

[a]lthough separate sheets get worn out, dirty, or lost, an unbound work can be read simultaneously by a large number of people who pass the single sheets to one another. This “total” absorption in information is quite a usual Russian pastime.

¹⁹⁰ Bonner cited in Billstein, *Die Samizdat-Connection*. Translation from German by author.

¹⁹¹ Skilling, “Independent Communications,” 60.

¹⁹² Telesin, “Inside ‘Samizdat,’” 28.

Scattered about on sofas, armchairs, at the table, on the floor, people are rustling pages. [...] Someone arrives and demands to be given the first pages that the others have already read. Someone else takes the owner of the manuscript to one side and starts negotiating to copy it.¹⁹³

The reading practice simultaneously mirrored and reinforced the common ground of interest and the “shared beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and moral judgments” that were produced, debated, and analyzed in *samizdat* texts.¹⁹⁴ A 1977 description of *samizdat* activity in *Time* accurately visualizes the professional and secretive character of *samizdat* production in Poland:

[i]n a modest Warsaw apartment three intellectuals lean intently over a small worktable. One man places a sheet of blank paper over an ink-impregnated flannel cloth that is taped over a typed stencil. Another man quickly rolls an old-fashioned washing-machine wringer down the page from top to bottom. A woman deftly lifts the sheet with a pair of tweezers and lays it on top of a pile on the floor. The printed pages, produced at the rate of 700 an hour, would later be laboriously collated, bound by hand, and delivered to readers of *Opinia*, an underground monthly.¹⁹⁵

This primitive method undoubtedly had one virtue: it developed a feeling of participation and cohesiveness among its readers, and created an audience of readers who were at the same time co-workers in the publishing effort.

SMUGGLING TO THE WEST

In addition to the social activity that *samizdat* fostered, *tamizdat* actively engaged activists on both sides of the Iron Curtain. For a large amount of written material published in the ‘Other Europe’ to reach its Western destination, secure transfer, information channels, and a great number

¹⁹³ Ibid., 31.

¹⁹⁴ Biddulph, “Soviet Intellectual Dissent,” 522.

¹⁹⁵ “Two Victories for the Word.”

of mediating figures were needed. The illegal circulation of texts across censored and uncensored spheres was dependent on the physical contribution of many individuals. Similar to the transfer inside the 'Other Europe,' the transnational literary exchange involved an advanced social practice of organized literary smuggling and the circulation of uncensored texts in the Western cultural sphere.¹⁹⁶

The sheer number of materials that reached the West by means of clandestine contacts proved to outsiders that a mass production involving many actors had developed inside the 'Other Europe.' Alfred Boiter notes that "[t]he evidence available outside the USSR [...] makes it clear that tens of thousands of people do take part in one way or another: as authors, petition signers, typists and copyists, distributors, and so on."¹⁹⁷ Despite the dangers inherent in smuggling books, Western tourists and writers often acted as agents smuggling both underground writings to the West and bringing unavailable Western novels into the 'Other Europe.' Autobiographies and other biographical documents suggest that the reality of smuggling literature comprised as many complex threads and levels of conspiracy as a movie thriller. During a conference in 1978, Vassily Aksyonov described the state of literature inside the Soviet Union as a society turned upside-down. "Under the communist sponsorship," he said, "literature itself has turned into a dangerous adventure—a sort of conspiracy, a matter of smuggling. So if you've heard something about *the Russian Connection*, please keep in mind that it concerns books rather than drugs."¹⁹⁸

The physical transfer posed many problems to those involved. Sinyavsky described the situation at the border when writers entered or left the Soviet Union:

[t]he new upheaval of the Russian literature can be best observed at the custom office. What are they mainly looking for? – Manuscripts. Not gold, not jewels and not even a plan of a Soviet factory, but manuscripts! And what is most looked for upon arrival to Russia? – Books. Books in Russian. Thus, the Russian literature that travels back and forth has a value. Hence, one needs to build a dam, a dyke, the hydroelectric

¹⁹⁶ Popa, "Translation Channels."

¹⁹⁷ Boiter, "Samizdat: Primary Source Material in the Study of Current Soviet Affairs," Sheet 2.

¹⁹⁸ Aksyonov, "The Writer and His Past," 333.

power station of Bratsk, in order to prevent books and manuscripts from coming through. But despite all this, they leak.¹⁹⁹

The continuous attempts by Soviet officials to prevent books from reaching the other side of the frontier provides an idea of these books' value. Yet, despite the risks, a great amount of *samizdat* material reached the West, engaging committed publishers and editors. Peter Reddaway, who worked for the New York *Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*, recalls in a radio interview in 1974: "[w]e were amazed at the volume of material forwarded to us: it was really enormous, so much so that we were never able to fit all the available material in one issue. The sources are many."²⁰⁰

People such as Edward Kline or the Russian émigré Valerie Chalidze were responsible for compiling the material and preparing it for publication in the West. As Mark Hopkins shows, the editors of the New York *Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*, for instance, made valuable use of the phone for gathering information.²⁰¹ Apart from receiving material via mail, phone communications linking Soviet underground activists and their Western publishers attracted less notice by the Soviet officials than the circulation of written manuscripts.²⁰² Van het Reve, the founder of the Alexander Herzen Foundation and a correspondent on the major Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool* in Moscow between 1967–1968, relied on the transmission of texts via the phone. He recounts a particularly memorable occasion of a work's transmission in 1970, when he relayed the text of a memorandum of Sakharov to the West by telephoning "all 10,000 words of it" from "Moscow to Amsterdam. Whoever of the Soviet censors was listening in on my call apparently did not know enough Dutch to understand what I was doing."²⁰³

Van het Reve's daughter, Jozien Driessen van het Reve, remembers this special day, when her father was "sitting on a low kitchen chair [in Moscow] close to the only telephone dictating *The Sacharov Memorandum* in Dutch to *Het Parool*."²⁰⁴ Similar to the New York intel-

¹⁹⁹ Sinyavsky, "Literatur als Prozess," 132. Translation from German by the author.

²⁰⁰ Cited in Hopkins, *Russia's Underground Press*, 130.

²⁰¹ Parry, "Samizdat is Russia's Underground Press," 249.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Driessen van het Reve, December 9, 2013.

lectuals who related their own activism to their parents' or grandparents' experiences during the Nazi period, van het Reve and his wife also received their 'instruction' at that time. Their daughter recalls that her "parents were trained [in] keeping secrets and acting carefully during the five years Holland was under the Nazi-German occupation as they were taking care of *onderduikers*, Jewish friends who did not report for extermination and went into hiding." Already then, the hiding of Jewish friends went hand in hand with their belief in the necessary supply of literature to protect their friends' mental health. "My mother [Mrs. Jozina Israël] is said to have taken care of mental food too," their daughter recalls, "she brought books as well as food." Her husband is also remembered for having received part of a diary of a very close Jewish friend, David Koker, that had been smuggled out of a concentration camp.²⁰⁵

When helping their Jewish friends survive, her parents learned the lesson that under certain circumstances people's survival was entirely dependent on secret and conspiratorial practices. For that reason, when they started to support non-conformist writers in the Soviet Union, "they understood how to talk Aesopic language," meaning talking in allegories when they were in Moscow. They seem to have been very careful with their Russian contacts, never mentioning "a Russian friend to other Russians they knew."²⁰⁶ Using the phone allowed van het Reve to avoid accruing any written—and thus traceable—evidence of his conversations with writers inside the Soviet Union.

Although much of Sakharov's work was successfully transmitted via phone, Sakharov himself remembers in 1975 how difficult this form of communication was for him and for the human rights movement in general. He recalls that his "telephone was the main channel to the West for information about all kinds of violations" for three years.²⁰⁷ Anticipating contemporary debates about internet access as a fundamental right, he urged the West to "consider the troubles with telephone communication as a serious violation of human rights," as it was not only a "formal question of breaking certain telephone conventions," but also that such violations actually prevented a "defense of human rights."²⁰⁸ Beyond this appeal to human rights, the malicious practice of interrupting communications meant that the Iron Curtain was "being again

²⁰⁵ See Koker, *At the Edge of the Abyss*, 3.

²⁰⁶ Driessen van het Reve, December 9, 2013.

²⁰⁷ Sakharov, "Why I Speak Out Alone," 19.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

pulled down” on their country.²⁰⁹ Despite all the obstacles, where there was a will, there was always a way to push for a work’s transmission and publication. The phone was not the only way for a text to reach the West.

In 1970 van het Reve explained how *samizdat* manuscripts really reached the West. The West entertained far too “romantic ideas about this,” van het Reve contended, believing in

[s]tealthy meetings in restaurants, parks, cinemas, underground stations or on street-corners, where briefcases are exchanged, microfilms hidden in tubes of toothpaste, double-bottomed suitcases, invisible ink, secret codes of recognition (the photograph torn in halves, the question “Can I borrow a match?” that has to be answered by “How did you like Swan Lake?”).²¹⁰

The reality of literary smuggling was far more prosaic. The Soviet police were in no position to open all international mail. Nevertheless, neither the few *samizdat* manuscripts van het Reve sent home to Amsterdam from Moscow nor a Russian copy of *Animal Farm* sent to him from Amsterdam actually reached their destinations. He remained convinced, however, that if he had sent “ten copies of that document to ten different addresses and in ten different envelopes” and had posted “these envelopes at ten different mailboxes on ten different days,” some of them would have arrived unopened.

Van het Reve tested many of these smuggling methods during his stay in Moscow and after his return to Amsterdam in 1968. His personal encounters with Andrei Amalrik, Pavel Litvinov and Andrei Sakharov in Moscow motivated him to set up the AHF in Amsterdam in 1969. After his return to Amsterdam, one of van het Reve’s first *tamizdat* publishing projects was to publish Amalrik’s famous work *Will the Soviet Union Survive 1984?* in Russian. It appeared with the AHF in 1969 and was shortly after translated into other languages. They shared the conviction that the incoming “manuscripts were written by real self-thinking people with real opinions they wanted to express,” while many other “Sovietologists thought these text were forged by the KGB.”²¹¹ They jointly invested much energy and time in receiving original *samizdat* man-

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Van het Reve, “Samizdat,” 21.

²¹¹ Driessen van het Reve, December 9, 2013.

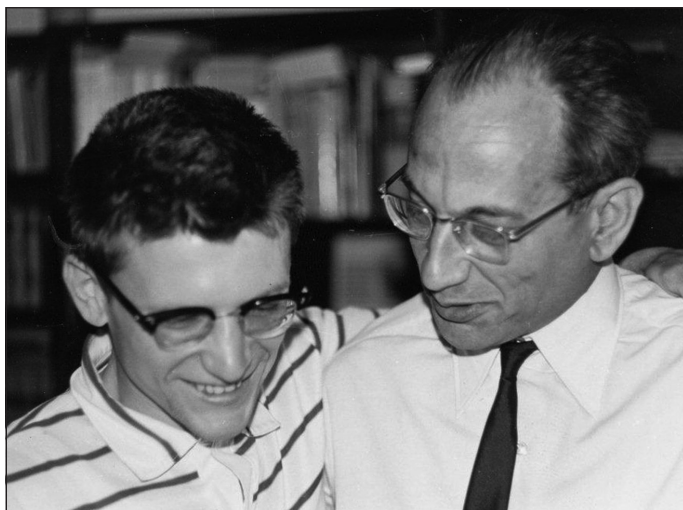


Figure 24: Photograph of Andrei Amalrik and Karel van het Reve at Amalrik's home, Ulitsa Vachtangova 5, Moscow, August 1968. Photography by Jozien van het Reve. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam.

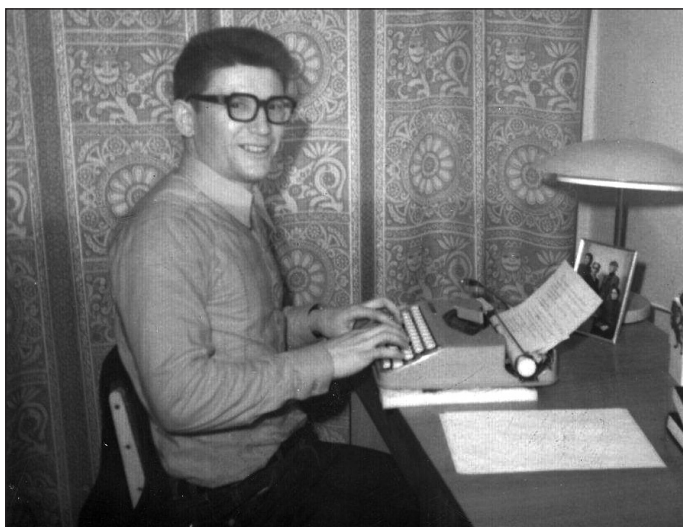


Figure 25: Photograph of Andrei Amalrik in Magadan, working on German edition of his work *Will the Soviet Union Survive 1984?* [*Kann die Sowjetunion das Jahr 1984 erleben?*]. Zurich: Diogenes, 1970. Photograph taken in Magadan, May 27, 1974. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam.



Figure 26: Photograph of Andrei Amalrik and Karel van het Reve at the copy machine at the Alexander Herzen Foundation which was also the home of Karel van het Reve and his family, Amstel 268. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam.

uscripts from Russia that they could print and publish with their press. Especially after his emigration to the Netherlands in 1976, Amalrik, who had established a close friendship with van het Reve, turned into a central mediating figure for the AHF.

Russian visitors to the West and Western visitors to Russia enabled the exchange of literature from and to the Soviet Union.²¹² Beyond simply mailing manuscripts, van het Reve's daughter remembers that "manuscripts arrived in Amsterdam or London by way of various persons." It would have been far too risky for someone to travel "round-trip to Moscow and back." Instead, "every now and then it occurred that someone, often a complete stranger, delivered a manuscript."²¹³ In this way the system of literary deliveries remained anonymous. As long as van het Reve and his wife were still inside the USSR, their friends and acquaintances "took manuscripts across the border." The AHF was extremely popular inside the Soviet Union, which is why "[e]very taxi

²¹² Van het Reve, "Samizdat," 21.

²¹³ Driessen van het Reve, December 9, 2013.

driver in Moscow knew of the red Amsterdam booklets and knew the address of the AHF where many visitors arrived.”²¹⁴ Word-of-mouth and the secret circulation of the red books from Amsterdam inside the Soviet Union created press publicity, which in turn facilitated the reception of original Russian documents.

As mentioned above, a great number of mediating figures, from foreign correspondents and émigrés to diplomats and travelers, were used as physical couriers to move the large amount of ‘Other Europe’ material to the West. Sometimes, however, the manuscripts were sent abroad “by more conspiratorial means.”²¹⁵ In Czechoslovakia, a group of determined underground writers developed a system that aimed to preserve contemporary banned Czech and Slovak literature by smuggling it out of the country. In particular, the Czech émigré Vilém Prečan, with the support of Karel Schwarzenberg, established, first from Hannover and then later from Scheinfeld near Munich, contacts with émigré journals and Western publishers. He also helped collect and archive the material in a repository for future research.²¹⁶ The Czechoslovak Documentation Center for Independent Literature, located at Schloss Scheinfeld near Munich, assembled most of the material that Prečan received in Hannover, as well as subsequent materials. (See on this, figures 28–31 on pp. 323–325.)

Prečan saw himself as a small link in the great social system of literary couriers, importers, and distributors who were jointly committed to distributing exile literature inside Czechoslovakia and smuggling it out of the country. “The couriers,” he wrote, “took care of the flow of information and the further distribution of news and letters in both directions, as well as of the supply of trustworthy readers with free literature.”²¹⁷ Aside from Vilém Prečan, Jiřina Šiklová—whose activities were described as resembling the work of a “carrier-pigeon”²¹⁸—had a reputation for being a professional smuggler. If someone wanted to get a literary work out of the country, they would get in touch with her. Šiklová, too, recalls feeling to be part of a chain. “My mission,” she said, “was to take care of things

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Skilling, “*Samizdat: A Return to the Pre-Gutenberg Era?*,” 69.

²¹⁶ The collection has been reallocated to Prague and continues its work under the name Czechoslovak Documentation Center. See <http://csds.cz/csds-en.php> (last accessed March 22, 2007).

²¹⁷ Prečan, “Die Jahre des grossen Wunders,” 262. Translation from German by the author.

²¹⁸ This is how she described herself. See Skilling, “Archive of Freedom,” 395.

here, to collect the manuscripts and get them into the van. As for the rest, I was kept in the dark. It was organic, how it developed.”²¹⁹ Using their social skills and sense for personal contact, Šiklová and many other women were able to maintain close ties with a great number of activists.

Following the human rights declaration issued in January 1977 and the ensuing creation of Charter 77, Czech *tamizdat* activity increased significantly. It already had a well-established history, however. The Czech couple Josef Škvorecký and Zdena Salivarová, for instance, set up the Toronto-based Sixty-Eight Publishers in 1971. Although this publishing endeavor is mostly mentioned in association with the famous scholar and writer Škvorecký, it was originally “Miss Salivarová who was the real founder of the publishing effort and its major driving force.”²²⁰ She recalls that “Josef had a job here and spoke English well when we arrived,” but she herself did not speak English and “felt cut off from things.” Thus, she realized that “there were other Czech émigrés who were cut off from their language,” which is why she decided to start the publishing venture. With the editorial assistance of her husband, they published around “20 books a year” that came out “in editions of about 2000 copies.”²²¹ Publishing so-called anti-state material led to the loss of their Czechoslovak citizenship.²²² They were convinced that the way to help the Czechoslovak dissidents with whom they kept in touch was “more publicity in the West.” In order to reach as many émigrés and other Czech-language readers as possible, she compiled “lists of Czech readers all over the world” and “a mailing list of 10,000.” She turned her publishing house into a nucleus of transnational contacts that shared their common interest in non-conformist Czechoslovak literature. Even if this publishing venture made no money and took “all her time,” as a source from 1984 reads, it provided “inestimable satisfaction to them both.”²²³ The social aspect of remaining in touch with their colleagues inside Czechoslovakia and gaining at the same time great reputation as literary mediators in Canada and the Western sphere turned this literary undertaking into a fulfilling life project.

The London-based Palach Press Agency, founded by Jan Kavan in London in 1974, also aimed to keep alive the channels between under-

²¹⁹ Cited in Rocamora, *Acts of Courage*, 120.

²²⁰ Kaufman, “Books Barred by Prague,” 21.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Goodman, “Life Inspires Czech Emigre’s Fiction,” C13.

²²³ Ibid.

ground activists inside Czechoslovakia and émigrés. In 2005, Kavan, the press agency's manager and editor-in-chief, recalled the events that made him stay in Britain after he left Prague in 1968. He followed a kind of "rule, or message" that he had received back from his "friends in Prague saying, stay abroad," because he "could be more helpful [...] outside than inside, given these new conditions."²²⁴ Material shortages and practical difficulties impaired the work of the literary underground,²²⁵ so they asked Kavan to meet their needs which were, he recalls, "first books, all the way to duplicating machines, eventually video recorders, financial support for persecuted dissidents."²²⁶

By 1970, Kavan was responding to these needs, setting up a complex smuggling operation between Britain and Czechoslovakia. He sought advice on organizing efficient smuggling conduits from Michael Randle, a young English activist that clandestinely carried *samizdat* from Brno to Moravia in the secret compartment of his VW van in January 1971.²²⁷ Lawrence Weschler thoroughly outlines Kavan's successful coordination of a whole group of "individual couriers streaming in and out of the country on a regular basis" that pulled "off forty consecutive van penetrations, one every three or four months, each one loaded down with more than a thousand pounds of contraband—all utterly undetected."²²⁸ Kavan's contact person Šiklová recounts that the car they used for such trips was "changed very often, not physically changed, but the make, number, and color, etc. And different people were drivers."²²⁹ Gordon Skilling similarly recalls that each time Kavan's "vans brought out dissident manuscripts and Charter 77 documents, clandestine films, and *samizdat* books and periodicals" the "van was repainted and had new license plates and new drivers."²³⁰ This description sheds light on the conspiratorial practice of establishing this literary community. Although many of the activists were not accustomed to conspiracy, numerous arrests and harsh censorship required anonymity. Šiklová describes the contribution of the Dutch who were part of the smuggling network:

²²⁴ Willoughby, "Jan Kavan—Part 1."

²²⁵ Kavan, *Love and Freedom*, 253.

²²⁶ Willoughby, "Jan Kavan—Part 1."

²²⁷ Kershaw, "The Trial of Jan K."

²²⁸ Weschler, *Calamities of Exile*, 86. An entire chapter is dedicated to the critical evaluation of Jan Kavan's activities see 63–136.

²²⁹ "Šiklová," cited in Long, "Reality Czech," 105.

²³⁰ Skilling, "Archive of Freedom," 390.

“[t]hey drove in the vans, smuggled in information, literature, equipment. I met many of them, but I didn’t and couldn’t know who they were. Just now in Holland, for instance, I learned for the first time the names and nationality of three Dutch ladies, with whom I was in contact.”²³¹ In order to secure their anonymity they used code-names, phoned from public phone booths, and met in public places to circumvent eavesdropping. Thanks to the careful preparation of the transports, only one was ever unmasked out of the approximately sixty-five vans that operated during nearly twenty years.²³² But the discovery of the van in 1981 had “far-reaching consequences for the Czech opposition.”²³³ In the early 1980s, when Polish Solidarity “was making headway in its fight for democratic change,” the StB [Czechoslovak Secret Police] became “fearful that the ‘Polish disease’ would spread.” They used the “van’s capture as a pretext to detain 30 leading Charter 77 activists and *samizdat* writers.”²³⁴ But most shipments reached their destination, either in Britain or in Czechoslovakia. Even more so, this joint illegal activity strengthened the community.

While Kavan was in Britain, the literary transmission between both countries was to a great extent a family-run business, as his key contact person inside Czechoslovakia was his mother. Although born in Britain, Rosemary Kavan decided to remain in Prague after her husband Pavel was sent to prison in the early 1950s, and she was “shunned as the wife of a traitor.”²³⁵ Years later, when the Prague Spring was in bloom, she not only typed *samizdat* and allowed her flat to be used as a meeting place, but also served as a literary smuggler. Realizing that a “[l]iaison between the underground and the West was essential,”²³⁶ it appeared obvious to her to “become one of the links inside the country,” with “Jan one of the links outside it.” Although she had no previous experience in smuggling, and she “did not feel exactly cut out for this job,” she undertook many smuggling activities in Prague herself. In her autobiography *Love and Freedom* she recalls how the smuggling activities were initiated:

²³¹ Cited in Randle, *People Power*, 179.

²³² Willoughby, “Jan Kavan—Part 2.”

²³³ Kershaw, “The Trial of Jan K.”

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Laber, “She Found a Home and Left It,” BR22.

²³⁶ Kavan, *Love and Freedom*, 252.

It always took me some time to collect myself out of a deep sleep when Jan phoned me at 1. a.m. to deliver some seemingly nonsensical message. [...] Then slowly the code would float into my head and I would formulate my coded reply.

What then followed varied slightly, but comprised basic patterns. "Accepting a case of 'subversive' material on a main highway in broad daylight" was something she "would not have cared to repeat too often." Nor was it one of her "favorite nocturnal pastime[s] dragging a rubbish bag of 'contraband' through Prague in the dead of night." As "[t]he black plastic dustbin liner was obviously foreign" and "the nature of its contents was recognizable from the bulges," she felt "as conspicuous as a murderer trying to dispose of a corpse." For this reason she "went on foot choosing narrow, ill-lit streets and hugging the houses." She never dared to "take a tram or even a taxi," because she also knew that not all "taxi drivers were fired intellectuals"; there were also "police informers among them." She was acutely aware that if the police stopped her, she would be in serious trouble, as there was no way to "explain away the possession of new books on controversial—or even non-controversial—subjects in English, Russian and German."²³⁷

After her return to London in 1971, Rosemary Kavan helped her son with the Palach Press Agency,²³⁸ "one of the few Western lifelines to Prague."²³⁹ Apart from the press's practical support of the literary and political underground inside Czechoslovakia, its principal function was to distribute Charter 77 materials to the British media. Similarly, Palach Press smuggled material out of Czechoslovakia. In 1979, it managed to extract a secret film that documented police harassment of Czech dissidents and their families, later used in calling attention to human rights causes.²⁴⁰ Many Chartists adopted Palach Press as their agency, sending manuscripts, articles, and photographs of activists under police observation.²⁴¹ The activists also used Palach Press to remain up-to-date with Western publications and information. The flow of Western literature into Czechoslovakia that the press facilitated "enabled dissidents, at least

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Shawcross, "Introduction," xi.

²³⁹ Laber, "She Found a Home and Left It," BR22.

²⁴⁰ Pick, "Plea for Czech Activists," 7.

²⁴¹ Kavan, *Love and Freedom*, 267.

in private, to continue their studies and research or at least keep abreast of their field." It also served as a "means of maintaining morale."²⁴²

Writers and activists inside Czechoslovakia also knew that they could use the press to address Western audiences. In 1978, for instance, Jan Kavan helped fifty-two Czechoslovaks appeal to Western leaders for the release of the Charter 77 spokesperson by contacting *The Observer*.²⁴³ A year later, Palach Press was reported to have "received the smuggled copies of the indictment against the six Chartists,"²⁴⁴ which Kavan then used "as a basis for articles in the Western press."²⁴⁵ As not only the original Charter 77 document but other appeals appeared first in the West, the Czechoslovak authorities were particularly sensitive about the Western publication of a subversive appeal or report. An article in *The Guardian* from October 1979 reports on the Czechoslovak authorities' reaction to an indictment's Western appearance:

The Czechoslovak authorities are alleging that Amnesty International [...] and the CIA were involved with human rights activists in Czechoslovakia in a campaign of subversion against the State. This emerges from the indictment against the six member of VONS [the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted] [...] whose trial is due to start in Prague on Monday. The indictment which was smuggled to the West [indicates] that any protest by Czechoslovak citizens which is publicized abroad makes these people guilty of subversion.²⁴⁶

Though regretting the negative side effects of such publications on his friends and colleagues inside Czechoslovakia, Jan Kavan did not become intimidated and continued his publishing work.

Jan Kavan's collection of *samizdat* informed books, movies, and of almost all European television programs that addressed the activities of the Chartists.²⁴⁷ *Panorama*, the BBC investigative program, even aired an episode about Czech activists, featuring an interview with Tom

²⁴² Ibid., 252–53.

²⁴³ See "Czech Plea to West."

²⁴⁴ Pick, "Czech Indictment Cites Amnesty," 7.

²⁴⁵ Kavan, *Love and Freedom*, 253.

²⁴⁶ Pick, "Czech Indictment Cites Amnesty," 7.

²⁴⁷ Kavan, *Love and Freedom*, 267.

Stoppard.²⁴⁸ Such activities helped Palach become a highly regarded, authoritative source of information,²⁴⁹ serving as “the first stop for British journalists” investigating events in Czechoslovakia.²⁵⁰ Kavan returned to Prague several days after the system change in November 1989, where he became a member of parliament. Only two years later, in March 1991, he was accused of having passed information to the secret police between 1969 and 1970. A five-hundred page StB file, titled “Kato,” documenting Kavan’s service as an informant was “leaked to local newspapers.”²⁵¹ News of his possible collaboration resulted in calls for his expulsion from parliament.²⁵² From the beginning of this post-communist investigation Kavan denied collaborating with the StB. Some articles of the time even speak of Kavan’s case as symbolizing “a kind of vindictiveness that has thrust Czechoslovakia to the forefront of East European nations in pursuing former communists.”²⁵³ While Kavan found some public support from dissidents, others were “raising the question of hypocrisy,” noting that “fierce anti-Communists were not nearly so brave when the country was in the iron grip of the old regime.”²⁵⁴

Kavan’s possible covert affiliation with the secret police draws attention to the difficulty of establishing ‘neutral’ evidence to support accusations of collaboration with the authorities. A sharp debate emerged over the question of the appropriateness of the charges or whether they represented “a witch hunt.”²⁵⁵ Those critical of the cases against alleged collaborators pointed out that the charges were based purely on secret police files and that there was no legal basis on which to dispute the charges.²⁵⁶ A change in legislation was needed. It was suggested that “only police agents whose collaboration can be proved without any doubt in an open investigation”²⁵⁷ should be investigated. In 1996, the Court of Appeals cleared Kavan of the charges entirely, as not enough proof could be assembled. But the public debate over Kavan’s possible collaboration

²⁴⁸ Pick, “Plea for Czech Activists,” 7.

²⁴⁹ Kavan, *Love and Freedom*, 267.

²⁵⁰ Kershaw, “The Trial of Jan K.”

²⁵¹ Engelberg, “Pilloried Czechs Cry Foul,” A4.

²⁵² “Prague Spy Charges Raise Witch-Hunt Fear,” A5.

²⁵³ “Prague Turns on Those Who Brought the Spring,” A9.

²⁵⁴ Engelberg, “Pilloried Czechs Cry Foul,” A4.

²⁵⁵ “Prague Spy Charges Raise Witch-Hunt Fear,” A5.

²⁵⁶ “Informer Charge on Prague Dissident Upheld,” 11.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

made clear “the wrenching problems” confronting former communist countries as they attempted “to separate the heroes from the villains.”²⁵⁸

Independent from this kind of post-1989 retrospective soul-searching which laid the foundation for the country’s transition to democracy, Kavan established a network of friends and activities that helped books penetrate the Iron Curtain in the 1970s and 1980s. The practice of this secretive sociability served as a basis for intense contact between the involved activists. The plethora of personal accounts illustrates that this network was not simply about discourses and debates. It was a place of personal encounter and common activities. Smuggling brought people together across borders. The personal risks involved in *samizdat* and *tamizdat* production were counterbalanced by participants’ intimate contact. This social layer turned the *tamizdat* phenomenon into an endeavor with particularly long-lasting societal effects, involving personal relationships that endure into the contemporary era.

Mirroring Kavan’s importance in Czechoslovakia, Mirosław Chojecki was the main figure for literary transfers within Poland and abroad. In 1977, he established Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza (NOWa, The Independent Publishing House) the largest Polish independent publishing house, which was active until 1989. Initially, NOWa published about one hundred underground titles, but this soon increased to fifty thousand underground newspapers a week.²⁵⁹ NOWa’s establishment was part of a reaction to the surge in interest for such clandestine journals as *Zapis*, one of the most famous uncensored Polish periodicals in the 1970s.²⁶⁰ Chojecki’s printing endeavor operated in a Warsaw apartment and “included 20 typewriters, six crude presses, and a skilled team of 30 people, who help[ed] to print, bind, and distribute *samizdat*.”²⁶¹ He had close connections to the Catholic Church and in particular to the Polish pope, Karol Wojtyła, who was thought to be the secret force behind many of the independent activities inside Poland. In an interview in 2004,²⁶² Chojecki explained that “it was impossible to buy any materials and equipment. The equipment was smuggled from

²⁵⁸ Engelberg, “Pilloried Czechs Cry Foul,” A4.

²⁵⁹ Kwitny, “Man of the Century.”

²⁶⁰ Sawyer, “Letter from Poland,” BR2.

²⁶¹ “Two Victories for the Word.”

²⁶² Chojecki, interview by the author.

the West, by Poles in Great Britain, France and Sweden, in particular from London. It was very important for us.”²⁶³

Japan also provided the Polish underground with support including printing equipment and matrices, the molds for casting letters used in letterpress printing. Chojecki explains that this unexpected channel was established “[b]ecause the plane from Tokyo stopped in Moscow and someone came from Moscow to Poland. [...] There were no difficulties; there was no border control at the airport.”²⁶⁴ Being a chemist, Chojecki was able to prepare the ink needed for the printing process once he had assembled the printing equipment. As access to paper was restricted, Chojecki used his “Fiat to transport paper stolen from government store-rooms to scattered, clandestine printing plants he had established.”²⁶⁵ When such methods no longer satisfied the growing demands of the literary underground, Chojecki resorted to other means:

I left Poland in November 1981, just before martial law, to the Frankfurt Book Fair. And when I was in Frankfurt, the chief of Solidarity called me, “Mirek, the Canadian trade union wants to give us some paper for our weekly. Please go to Canada to organize the transport of the paper, because it is very difficult now in Poland to obtain a passport.” It was just before martial law. So, I went.²⁶⁶

Plain white paper was the reason for Chojecki’s emigration, first to New York and then to Paris. After staying in New York for two months he decided that it was “too far from Warsaw,” as he always had to fly and the “information lines were cut.” He felt that “Paris was nearer,” as it had better travel connections to Poland. Thus, he moved to Paris “to be nearer [to] Poland, to have information from Poland, and help my friends in the underground.” During his nine years in the city his job was to “organize the transport of printing and of radio equipment.”²⁶⁷ Being in Paris allowed Chojecki to continue his activities as a literary courier, to arrange large transports of printing equipment to Poland, and to organize

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ “Two Victories for the Word.”

²⁶⁶ Chojecki, interview by the author.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

the smuggling of books into and out of the country. One of his riskiest activities was his contact with Polish prisoners:

I maintained contact with my friends in Poland, in the underground, by letters. But my biggest action was sending letters into the prison in Warsaw. This was very important. I prepared the package with some food, sugar, and with onions. And in this package I put some onions. Into the onion I put a small letter. I asked my friends in Warsaw, to whom I sent this package: "Please send this package to my friends in prison without indicating an address."²⁶⁸

In this way, Chojecki succeeded in establishing contact with people who had been cut off from most communication channels. The person who received the onion could read Chojecki's message and further communicate it to his inmates. Besides sending individual packages to Poland, Chojecki could put one or two packages of printing material—mostly paper—into Catholic Church transports.

A far more effective way was to drive vans filled with printing materials and books to Poland. With the help of a friend, Chojecki altered a car so that huge amounts of printing materials could be hidden from border controls. A friend drove ten transports to cities such as Gdańsk, Poznań, and Warsaw, but "the eleventh time was the last time and after the last transport he spent three months in prison in Poland." From the mid-1980s onwards, *magnitizdat* was the most important medium for transporting materials to the West, since, as Chojecki says, "it was very simple to put information on audio cassettes [...] to put everything on it." All types of people used this format to smuggle material out of Poland. Chojecki recalls trying to organize access for journalists, including camera equipment and personnel. His efforts meant that correspondents went back to Paris with reports and interviews for the television news.²⁶⁹

The Hungarian underground employed different means of illegal literary transfer. János Kenedi recounts how *The Medvedev Papers* by the Russian author Zhores A. Medvedev influenced him.²⁷⁰ The book itself was produced in *samizdat* and then smuggled to the West. The

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Medvedev, *The Medvedev Papers*.

section entitled “Secrecy of Correspondence,” in particular, encouraged Kenedi’s own attempts to find holes in Hungary’s censorship system. Kenedi realized that Hungarian “censorship was not total, not complete, but selective, in contrast to the Soviet case. Besides this, the selection process was different. The first difference, which I detected, was that there existed institutions whose letters did not go through the postal system at all.”²⁷¹ He tried to detect a logic to the censorship system, to find out which letters passed through the central post office where the censorship bureau was located.²⁷² He discovered a very useful loophole in the system, which he employed for many years:

I found out that some letters from certain institutions were not sent to the post office. And then I started to look at the mail of some institutions where a particular stamp, which is, by the way, the Eastern railway station postal office stamp, did not appear. And then among the letters that did not carry the stamp I found the Széchényi library. The interlibrary loan never had the stamp. So from then on, when I was absolutely sure that the Széchényi library interlibrary loan never goes through the censorship of the post, I started to send and receive all the manuscripts this way.²⁷³

Relying on his friends who worked at the library, Kenedi sent and received materials he was interested in, mainly uncensored literary materials.²⁷⁴ In this way, Kenedi collected the material he needed to publish two journals: the *Kelet-Európai Figyelő*, which published articles by non-conformist authors from Central Europe between 1976 and 1981, and, together with János Kis, the *Máshonnan Beszélő*, the sister *samizdat* newspaper of *Beszélő*. This journal existed between 1983 and 1989 and reprinted foreign articles in Hungarian. It was thus a kind of upside-down *tamizdat* journal, in which forbidden Western literature could be published and read by Hungarian *samizdat* circles. However, there was one condition of using the Széchényi Library’s interlibrary loan system: Kenedi had to remain absolutely silent about this transfer channel in order not to “endanger those [working] in the archives and libraries.” He

²⁷¹ Kenedi, interview by the author.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

kept it such a “secret” that when Havel sent “a [female] English courier for the exchange of manuscripts” via the Palach Press in 1985 Kenedi never told her even though they later lived together for ten years. Kenedi remembers that she “never understood how articles arrived in London from him, nor did Havel understand how the articles were arriving to Prague without his courier.”²⁷⁵

Havel employed more traditional means to send material via the Palach Press to Hungary. In particular, Kenedi remembers two couriers especially well. One, an English woman, was “the Czech cultural attaché in London” and “was extremely good at carrying articles back and forth from Hungary.” Her numerous visits to Hungary allowed them to become close within “a situation of very difficult East European political relations.” Her skills meant that she “never got caught, she was very, very good, but she was probably the only one.”²⁷⁶ The other courier, mentioned above, with whom Kenedi had a personal relationship, was caught by the police:

[b]ut my girlfriend, when she came here after a few errands she got caught and then she had to stop taking things back and forth and she never took things for me. But then once, after she stopped, Demszky asked her to take something to London. I asked her not to do it, but she did it and she got caught and then the result was that her visa was taken away, she could not come back to Hungary, the only solution was to change her name, get a new passport, and then continue to come back that way. In this aspect, the Hungarian control was quite total.²⁷⁷

Apart from this experience, another incident convinced Kenedi never again to use a Hungarian citizen for literary smuggling:

[t]here was one kind of a tragic incident when Kende asked me about an article for the Hungarian *Füzetek*, and it was very urgent and there was no time to do it any other way. That was the only time when he asked a Hungarian citizen to take it and this person got caught at the airport and the consequence was quite dramatic. This person was fired and was banned from

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

publication for seven or eight years. That was such a tragic consequence that I never did it again, giving it to a Hungarian citizen.²⁷⁸

Unlike the grave consequences that affected Hungarian citizens, Westerners were prevented only from coming “back to Hungary for five or ten years, they just did not get a visa.”²⁷⁹ They therefore made much better carriers for literary transfers. For instance, when Tom Stoppard’s Czechoslovakian visa was once rejected, he even dared to write an open letter to the Czechoslovak president Gustáv Husák, in which he described his urgent need to return to Prague. His desire had become an end in itself, and he was reluctant to explain himself to the authorities. He felt it should be his business whether he was going “as a tourist for another look at the castle,” or just to “shake the hands of a few people” who had “fallen from grace” to reaffirm that they had “not been entirely forgotten and ignored.” Out of a deep sense of frustration with official channels, he decided to try it “with a sideways attempt” and address Husák directly with his “final application for a visa to visit the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.”²⁸⁰ When Western tourists did not get the needed visa, however, non-conformist authors had to employ other means to get their literature smuggled out. Kenedi mentions a third, even more unusual, means of literary transfer which involved buying a double LP “which would contain two records in one cover. I would cut out one of the covers, put the articles next to the record, then seal the record cover back and then send it with the post.”²⁸¹ This method seems to have functioned relatively successfully.

Apart from employing these inventive secretive channels, Hungarian writers had another publishing means at their disposal: the journals of Hungarian minorities abroad.²⁸² In an interview in 2004, Sándor Radnóti recalls his contact with two journals in Novi Sad [Újvidék], the administrative center of Voivodina in northern Serbia. “Something interesting took place in Yugoslavia,” he said, where “[t]here was a Hungarian minority, and this minority had jour-

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Stoppard, “Open Letter to President Husák.”

²⁸¹ Kenedi, interview by the author.

²⁸² This was also the case in Nagyvárad (Transylvania), where the journal *Ellenpontok* was established in 1982. See Sándor, *Kiáltó Szó*.

nals. And there I had publications.” The fact that the political situation in Voivodina was better than in Hungary played an imported role. “In Novi Sad I could publish things that I could not publish in Budapest. But then *samizdat* came to Hungary, and then I became a *samizdat* author.”²⁸³ Since the literary authorities in Voivodina were less restrictive than the Kádár regime in Hungary proper, the two literary magazines in which Radnóti published his work, *Híd* (1945) and *Új Symposion* (1965), were used by many other Hungarian intellectuals as an external means of publishing their works during the 1960s and 1970s. As Ágnes Ózer observes: “[t]hroughout these years, Újvidék/Novi Sad preserved its open spirit; it was receptive to much that was modern from the outside world and, through the channels of ‘spiritual osmosis,’ communicated those trends to a Hungary that was still isolated behind the Iron Curtain.”²⁸⁴ At the end of the 1960s, Kenedi published an article in *Új Symposion*. However, this decision produced a strong reaction from many of his colleagues. “Around thirty to forty intellectuals attacked me after the publication,” Kenedi recalls, “asking me how I dare publish there, because ever since I published there the journal was banned, and they could not get hold of it and could not subscribe to it. Because at the time, state security was focused on individuals, and I was being watched.”²⁸⁵ Publishing as a banned author in an official journal abroad could severely disrupt the journal’s publishing activities. The author’s reputation could result in the discontinuation of such journals. As such, *samizdat* remained a safer means to publish.

THE GERMAN-GERMAN CONNECTION

Much of the research on cross-Iron Curtain contacts during the Cold War still analyzes the opposition in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) as a separate phenomenon from the other Soviet Bloc opposition movements.²⁸⁶ This misperception has often led to isolated studies on the GDR that obscure parallels with Central

²⁸³ Radnóti, interview by the author.

²⁸⁴ Ózer, “Hungarians in the Serbian Athens,” 132–33.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ On the GDR see Kowalkczuk, ed., *Freiheit und Öffentlichkeit. On Central Europe*; see Skilling, *Samizdat and an Independent Society*.

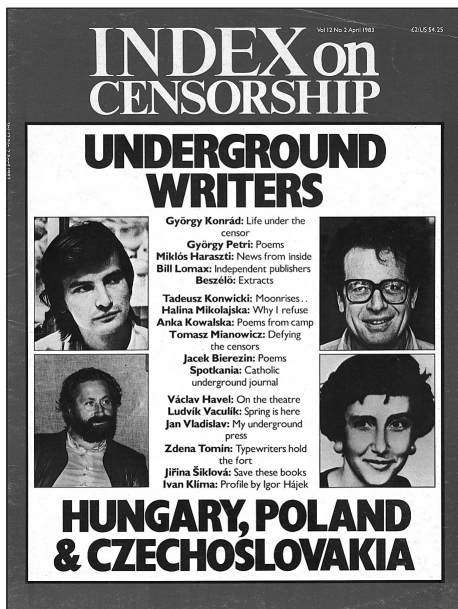


Figure 27: Cover of *Index on Censorship*, "Underground Writers," Vol. 12, No. 2, April 1983. Archive of *Index on Censorship*, London.

and Eastern Europe.²⁸⁷ Even during socialism, Western journals often discussed Central European, Russian, and East German opposition movements and discourses in different contexts. In 1983, for example, the British journal *Index on Censorship* published the article "Underground Writers," which featured authors solely from Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, with no mention made of East German writers.²⁸⁸

It is, however, vital to recognize the role of the GDR and German-German borders as the symbolic "epicentre of the East-West tension."²⁸⁹ The fall of the Berlin Wall was a symbol not just of Germany's reunification, but also of subsequent developments across the Soviet

Bloc and the end of Europe's division as a whole. Thus, thanks to the events of 1989, the GDR opposition gained central significance in the universal collapse of European state socialism. In 1990, Jacques Rupnik emphasized how "the democratic tide which since September of 1989 has shaken the very foundations of the German Democratic Republic [...] made more obvious than ever the direct connection between political change in East Central Europe and 'the German question.'"²⁹⁰ But it was

²⁸⁷ Pforte, "Disunitedly United"; Hirschbach, "Some Additional Comments on Book Publishing in the GDR"; Plock, *East German—West German Relations*. One of the few articles comparing Central Europe and East Germany is Phillips, "The Politics of Reconciliation Revisited."

²⁸⁸ Special Issue "Underground Writers," *Index on Censorship* 12 (1983).

²⁸⁹ Brunssen, "Günter Grass and the Cold War," 150.

²⁹⁰ Rupnik, "Central Europe or Mitteleuropa?," 249.

not just 1989 that turned the GDR into an integral part of the opposition in the 'Other Europe.'

The transfer of literature between the GDR and West Germany was a special case. Underground authors in the GDR inhabited a unique position inside the 'Other Europe' due to their personal relationships with people in the Western part of Germany. The Berlin Wall represented Europe's most iconic Iron Curtain, and Germany was "the symbol par excellence of a partitioned continent,"²⁹¹ coming to epitomize the entire continent's division. Paradoxically, however, internal German connections were the most thoroughly institutionalized regional cases of trans-systemic interaction. Due to the isolationist policy of the SED, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, and to its particular relationship with West Germany, the character of the opposition in the GDR was different from other opposition movements inside the Soviet Bloc. In contrast to *samizdat's* context and outlook across the Soviet Bloc, underground literature in the GDR attempted to remain within a legal framework to a certain extent.

Publications that appeared under the auspices of the Protestant church, for instance, mentioned the church as their official sponsor and carried the church stamp of legal protection. The terminology "for official use within the church only" [Nur zum innerkirchlichen Dienstgebrauch] kept this type of underground literature from being entirely non-conformist.²⁹² One reason for this was a resistance to giving up on socialism as an individual, moral belief system. The GDR was not necessarily more tolerant, as David Bathrick points out. Rather, "for reasons of its own history and because it has remained public, oppositional literature in the GDR is not comparable to the kinds of dissent that have developed in other East Block countries." The dissent was circumscribed by Marxist-Leninism.²⁹³ When comparing the role of oppositional literary movements throughout the Soviet Bloc, Gerhard Wolf points to the inherent alterity of the situation in the GDR:

things were very different here than the way they were in Poland or the Soviet Union. That was the problem that underground literature faced: it was far from having the same standing in the GDR as it did in Czechoslovakia. [...] You can say that there

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Riley, *Everyday Subversion*, 123–33.

²⁹³ Bathrick, "The Politics of Culture," 7.

was a rich *samizdat* culture here. Not—as in the Soviet Union—[...] about camps and things like that, but still different literature, quite consciously different from what prevailed otherwise. Because of the German situation, there was scarcely any direct persecution.²⁹⁴

“The German situation” Wolf refers to relates to the unique characteristics of the German-German geographical and linguistic area. Although cut into two, it was difficult to completely disentangle the German literary market.

However, an article in *Die Welt* that predates the construction of the Wall questioned the existence of a cohesive German literature:

[t]he exchange of books between both parts of Germany over the Elbe might be perceived as significant by those who had no clue that something like an all-German book trade still exists. [...] But at the beginning of 1960, we need to ask ourselves if—in the current state of the developments in East and West—it is still permissible to talk about a “German Literature” that embraces both parts of our country, or if we should not get used to the desperate thought that an all-German literature does not exist in any considerable amount anymore. The time when we will replace “German” with “German-speaking,” if we talk about literature from both parts of Germany, does not seem far off.²⁹⁵

Despite the official non-existence of a pan-German literary scene, a number of intersections shaped the sphere of unofficial contacts. Ironically, the construction of the Berlin Wall fostered the emergence of an unofficial contact zone between the GDR’s underground literary scene and the West German literary market. In an article for the *New York Review of Books* in 1971, John Willet recalls that “[o]ddly enough,

²⁹⁴ Cited in von Hallberg ed., *Literary Intellectuals and the Dissolution of the State*, 289.

²⁹⁵ Karlheinz Vater, “Es würde ja keiner diese Bücher kaufen...wir nicht die ihren und sie nicht die unseren—Als Gast beim Leipziger Börsenverein,” *Die Welt*, March 2, 1960. HU OSA 300-3-1. German Affairs. East German Subject Files-Culture, Literature, Critics, Pen 1956–1960. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

when the real wall went up across Berlin in 1961, the situation began to improve.”²⁹⁶

This German-German cross-border sphere accounts for the uniqueness of the character of the GDR opposition. In contrast to other literary underground movements inside the Soviet Bloc, East Germans had the opportunity to continue publishing in German, even when their writings crossed the national borders of the GDR. To some extent, the Western publication of non-conformist literature from the GDR even replaced the East German literary underground. Many West German publishing houses specialized in printing the so-called “literary enemies” of the German people. Thanks to the effort and “enterprise of such West German publishers as Luchterhand, Hanser, and Rowohlt,” established writers of the older generation, such as Günter Kunert or Anna Seghers, and a range of younger, lesser known writers including Manfred Bieler, Wolf Biermann, and Christa Wolf were published in West Germany.²⁹⁷ Poets such as Reiner Kunze only became well-known “through Western publicity which is by nature anathema in official East German eyes.”²⁹⁸ This process developed throughout the 1960s until “any self-respecting West German critic, publisher’s reader, or academic *Germanist* [had] to treat East German writing as part of his own increasingly open field.”²⁹⁹ Thus, through the cross-border publishing market, foreign readers of German literature could go on reading the literatures of both Germanies.

The divided city of Berlin, in particular, provided an important venue for literary transfers between East and West Germany. However, GDR cultural authorities realized, as Marcel Reich-Ranicki argued in a 1966 *Die Zeit* article, that the Western publications of writers such as Robert Havemann, Stefan Heym, and Wolf Biermann severely affected their reputation abroad. They reacted on February 7, 1966, by publishing a decree about the preservation of copyrights.³⁰⁰ The decree declared that the West German publication of a book would only be

²⁹⁶ Willet, “The Quest for East Germany.”

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Dorothy Miller, “The East German Literary Scene. Ten years of the ‘Bitterfeld Way.’” Radio Free Europe Research, June 4, 1969, HU OSA 25-5-188. Sheet 12. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio. Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

²⁹⁹ Willet, “The Quest for East Germany.”

³⁰⁰ “Anordnung über die Wahrung der Urheberrechte durch das Büro für Urheberrechte,” February 7, 1966, cited in Schulze, *Urheberrecht in der Musik*, 393.

legal after two publishing houses in the GDR had rejected the manuscript. Publication abroad was only legally acknowledged after the Main Administration for the Publishing Book Trade [Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhandel], which was responsible for all questions related to publishing, and the Office for Copyright Law [Büro für Urheberrechte], which granted copyright permissions, had signed the publication contract. Paragraph 6 determined that an author who wanted to publish their book in the West without printing permission could be charged for treasonable anti-state agitation, thereby risking high fines and even imprisonment.³⁰¹ Regardless of the introduced legislation, however, an unofficial contact zone emerged between Germany's literary markets. But only after Erich Honecker had replaced Walter Ulbricht as the General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party and leader of the GDR in 1971, did the party relax its literary politics. Honecker distanced himself from Ulbricht's understanding of literature and introduced reforms of the rigid literary policies. Although not allowing any author to question the literary dogma of the GDR radically, a slow process towards literary relaxation began. Resulting from this, books that had only appeared in West Germany also appeared finally in the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s.

Apart from West German publishers, English-language publishers were also keen to receive literature from East Germany. An East German work was sure to receive a widespread readership in the United States during the 1970s, when many works from East Germany could not gain publicity inside their own country. East German texts were an important part of the flow of books from the state socialist countries to the United States, where they were translated for and distributed in the American book market. In a 1975 article in *The New York Times*, Herbert Mitgang pointed out that "[g]overnment sensibilities play a part in the flow of books across the Atlantic and across Europe's sensitive borders."³⁰² When a book managed to cross the Iron Curtain and was taken on by a New York publishing house, it "was more than a literary act: it sent a message across the Wall."³⁰³ The path to the United States often passed through West Germany, however. For instance, the manuscript of *Die wunderbaren Jahre* (*The Wonderful Years*) by the leading GDR writer Reiner Kunze was covertly brought into West Germany after its comple-

³⁰¹ Reich-Ranicki, "Nur noch mit Genehmigung."

³⁰² Mitgang, "Publishing: Writing on the Berlin Wall."

³⁰³ Ibid.

tion in 1975, subsequently selling thirty thousand copies in 1976 and becoming “one of the plums being offered at the Frankfurt Book Fair,” where an American publisher promptly optioned it. The fact that the book had not been released in the GDR only increased its attractiveness in the eyes of American publishers and Western readers.³⁰⁴ By 1983, the number of German books in translation had overtaken translations from French literature.³⁰⁵ American publishers in particular (such as Lawrence Hill, George Braziller, and Farrar, Straus, and Giroux) became interested in the literature spilling out of East Germany and started to publish books by East German writers.³⁰⁶

The appearance of East German literature resonated across the Atlantic and the Berlin Wall, impacting “the creative and personal lives of authors in East Germany.”³⁰⁷ Furthermore, the publication of East German works in the English-speaking world was believed to have “the dual effect of introducing readers to deserving works in translation” and “calling attention to the plight of a writer in trouble with its government, state-sanctioned publishing house or writers’ union.” When East German authors experienced state discrimination, American publishers often publicly demonstrated empathy towards their authors. In 1978, Roger W. Straus Jr. of Farrer, Straus, and Giroux, Christa Wolf’s English-language publisher, wrote a letter to Hermann Kant, the vice president of the East German Writers’ Union protesting Wolf’s debarment from an important literary congress in East Berlin, declaring that “we assume that Mrs. Wolf is being punished for her political beliefs, for her honesty, and for her open support of her colleagues and friends.”³⁰⁸ American publishers hoped to affect a change in the government’s treatment of its authors through their public statements. Despite the United State’s influence and support of the East German literary scene, the main publishing sphere for East German works were West German publishing houses. Austrian journals occasionally joined the movement and served as an alternative Germanophone sphere that promoted unofficial East German concerns. In 1981, the Austrian journal *Gegenstimmen* published an entire GDR dossier in which East German authors outlined their non-conformist ideas.

³⁰⁴ Lask, “Publishing: The First That Weeps.”

³⁰⁵ Bruckner, “Reading and Writing.”

³⁰⁶ Mitgang, “East Germans Publish in U.S.,” C15.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

However, the reliance of these authors on publicity and audiences abroad simultaneously weakened the efficiency of non-conformism inside the GDR. Torsten Metelka argues that due to a common language and existing German-German contacts, it was far easier for East Germans to publish in the West than it was for Poles, Russians, Hungarians or Czechs. East German non-conformist authors “had the exile publishing houses,” he said, “but the urge for autonomy, for self-publication developed far more extensively” in the other countries of the Eastern Bloc.³⁰⁹ The East German literary market was therefore less isolated than the Hungarian movement, which automatically required translation into another language to gain international recognition. Both East German underground authors who published in West Germany and émigrés had far fewer problems with literary assimilation and acculturation. Many writers nevertheless published abroad despite “their awareness that the West often misunderstands, or reads only for political dissidence, and that texts once published in the West are never generally available to a GDR public.”³¹⁰ The entire *samizdat* scene, then, was “vulnerable due to this factionalism, the suspicion of possible infiltration, and of excessive Western contact.”³¹¹ But this is just one critical voice pointing to the inherent dangers of the East German publishing activity in West Germany. Easy access to the West German media did exist and was continuously used to voice the concerns of the otherwise largely suppressed literary opposition.

It was not only underground authors in the GDR that were in a unique position. The GDR populace enjoyed easier access to uncensored media from the “free world” due to the lack of language barriers and to the maintenance of familial networks across the Wall. Yet the fact that most people had access to Western media outlets and that borders were “virtually helpless in preventing the infiltration of Western publications” had a double-edged impact on opposition in the GDR.³¹² In comparison to other opposition movements in the Soviet Bloc, West German television stations such as ARD and ZDF, the two major public German

³⁰⁹ Metelka in “Das freie Wort war die schärfste Waffe der Opposition,” round-table discussion led by Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk with Stephan Bickhardt, Ludwig Mehlhorn, Torsten Metelka, Gerd Poppe, and Reinhard Weissshuhn, 109.

³¹⁰ Von Flotow, “*Samizdat* in East Berlin,” 210.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Bathrick, “The Politics of Culture,” 6.

television broadcasters, played a role similar in the GDR as those in Central and Eastern Europe. Along with West German print and electronic media, they formed “a readily accessible *ersatz* public sphere” that hindered the emergence of alternative media.³¹³

Yet, the emerging literary contact zone between the two Germanies relied on the physical permeability of the Iron Curtain. Those who wanted access to the West German media market had to find loop-holes in order to receive West German material or send something out. In a report to RFE/RL in 1979 Sharon L. Kegerreis observes that West German publishing houses easily printed books that could not be published in the GDR, while the writers only received a minimal fine of three hundred Deutschmark, a routine that the underground writer Stefan Heym called “buying a bit of freedom.”³¹⁴ Freedom was realized through the networks of discreet friends and acquaintances who dared to smuggle manuscripts abroad. As with literary smuggling in and out of Czechoslovakia, anonymity was a crucial feature of the way these transfer paths worked. In particular, tourism produced an array of opportunities for literary exchanges, as West German travelers to the GDR smuggled in not just consumer goods, but also literary products and care packages containing such miscellany as sports magazines. Remembering a trip to the GDR, Barbara Amelung recalls that

I drove over Wolfsburg to Dresden with my daughter. [...] Then came border control. We did not have to get off the train. Amalrik's *Can the Soviet Union Survive 1984?* and Orwell's *Animal Farm* were in my daughter's small suitcase. We were searched. I had to open my suitcase, lift up a few pieces, and show them, nothing was found. My daughter's small suitcase remained unnoticed in the luggage net. [...] We took books during every trip to the GDR. Of course they were forbidden books.³¹⁵

Apart from individual transfers, foreign diplomats and their employees played a crucial role in the physical transfer of literature. The libraries

³¹³ Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989*, 107.

³¹⁴ Kegerreis, “The Politics of Silence: Culture and Kulturpolitik in the GDR.” HU-OSA 26-9-9, RAD Background Report 212, October 2, 1979.

³¹⁵ Amelung, “Erinnerungen an den privaten Bücherschmuggel.”

of Western embassies provided great amounts of Western journals and newspapers that were inaccessible to readers inside the Soviet Bloc. GDR citizens often went to Hungary on holiday, especially to Lake Balaton which—due to Hungary’s easy visa regulations—turned into a popular holiday destination where inhabitants of both German states could meet.³¹⁶ In addition to meeting friends and relatives from the West, East German tourists would use diplomats’ libraries to read Western newspapers. Apart from library services, embassies served as meeting points for the opposition and Western activists, in other words, as centers for cross-border community building. Journalists and other public figures used their publicity and their inviolability to transport delicate pieces across the Iron Curtain. In the West German context Heinrich Böll became a prominent advocate and the physical agent of this so-called “*Tamisdat* connection.”³¹⁷ His private *Ostpolitik* entailed using his fame to support persecuted writers,³¹⁸ to publicize cases of oppressed authors and to push for their works to be published in West Germany. Beyond this, Böll privately smuggled various Solzhenitsyn manuscripts on microfilm out of the Soviet Union.

In addition to diplomats, journalists, and Western public figures, many GDR authors who had either voluntarily emigrated or were simply forced out of the country served as mediators between the two German states. The practice of forced emigration, which the GDR employed to counter internal opposition, resulted in a large presence of GDR writers in West Germany. Rainer Schedlinki observes that “[n]o one who was critical of the state was in prison for long. He was shot off to the west. That was the worst that could happen to you; that was the weak point of the system.”³¹⁹ Thus, particularly from 1976 onwards, when Wolf Biermann was stripped of his citizenship, the literary opposition shifted

³¹⁶ A number of exhibitions and publications told the story of the German encounters at Lake Balaton. See for instance: “German unity at Lake Balaton – a European history,” http://www.dortmund.de/en/leisure_and_culture/ruhr2010_en/art_creativity/balaton_1/.

³¹⁷ Billstein’s movie *Die Tamisdat-Connection* outlines the cross-border contact in a detailed, fascinating way.

³¹⁸ On Heinrich Böll’s “*Ostpolitik*” see “Wir Müssen das Unsrige Tun,” *Der Spiegel*, July 22, 1985. About Günter Grass’s involvement with East German authors, see Brunssen, “Günter Grass and the Cold War,” 156.

³¹⁹ Cited in von Hallberg, ed., *Literary Intellectuals and the Dissolution of the State*, 272.

to West Berlin and West Germany,³²⁰ strengthening cross-border contacts. Activists such as Jürgen Fuchs and Roland Jahn served as mediating figures in the establishment of a German-German network of literary exchanges. Jahn recounts the reaction he had to his forced exile: “[i]n West Berlin I started to form a meeting place for information from the East and in order to keep contact with the Western press.”³²¹ Aware of the necessity of literary couriers, Jahn established a “network of secret couriers, who went back and forth between East and West, and who transported letters, forbidden books, printing machines.” Many of these individuals were politicians in the Bundestag, in particular, Green Party members, diplomats, and tourists. Across the entire Soviet Bloc, diplomats and politicians with special privileges played a crucial role in the physical transport of literature and other goods. In particular, “the interplay between East and West made it possible to create a public sphere” where activists could react to arrests, protest, demonstrate, and hold church vigils for prisoner releases.³²²

The West Berlin radio program *Radio Glasnost—ausser Kontrolle* which broadcast *samizdat* materials and *magnitizdat* from the GDR to publicize the thoughts and actions of the GDR opposition was another manifestation of the cooperation between East and West Germans.³²³ With the words “the manuscript comes from beyond the wall,” Ilona Marenbach introduced the first broadcast on July 22, 1987.³²⁴ But despite the ongoing entanglement of the German-German sphere, it could also alienate the societies involved. Ludwig Mehlhorn remembers he had been afraid that publishing in the West German media would remain dominant in certain oppositional groups. It appeared to him that “being published in the West or mentioned in the *Tagesschau*,” the oldest and the most watched German television news program, “became an end in itself.”³²⁵ But even if it had become a rule that authors whose literature was forbidden in the GDR could be certain of publicity in the West—this

³²⁰ Schmitz and Bernig, eds., *Deutsch-Deutsches Literaturexil*, 76. See also Zimmermann, *Literaturbetrieb Ost-West*; Buchholz, Schmitz, and Schönfelder, eds., *Samizdat in Mitteleuropa*.

³²¹ Roland Jahn, interview conducted for the program “Unterstützung der DDR Opposition.” Translation from German by the author.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ See Daughtry, “Magnitizdat as Cultural Practice.”

³²⁴ “Opposition auf Sendung.” Translation from German by the author.

³²⁵ Mehlhorn cited in “Das freie Wort war die schärfste Waffe der Opposition,” 128.

prohibition counted as seal of quality—,³²⁶ publication did not guarantee a rapprochement of the two literary cultures. In the GDR dossier of the Austrian journal *Gegenstimmen*, the editors pointed out how East German authors capitalized from other German-speaking literary markets:

[t]hey understand themselves as a left, socialist opposition to the existing system of the GDR [...] They have accorded us the text to influence the discussion in the GDR. It is a text from the GDR for the GDR; the publication is only owed to the circumstances. The authors see their sphere of influence in the other German state. They don't want to become a "case" for Western leftists.³²⁷

The emphasis on East German independence was equally formulated in relation to the material support the East German opposition received from West German printing equipment. Even if the financial support from West German activists had a clear impact on the emergence of non-conformist literature in the GDR, some oppositional groups wanted to free themselves from this imbalance:

[w]ithout help from the west, the small East German opposition, such as it was, never would have achieved as much as it did. The money, moral support, media attention, and protection provided by Western supporters may have made as much of a difference to the opposition as West German financial support made to the East German state. Yet this help was often resented and rarely acknowledged by Eastern activists.³²⁸

Apart from the need to present themselves as an independent opposition, this perception of German-German literary transfer sometimes reflected a deeper estrangement. Böll pointed out that literary contacts suffered heavily from miscommunication and needed modes of cultural translation to bridge the systemic divide: "[o]ne thinks that we speak the same language; naturally we speak the same language and I can commu-

³²⁶ Schmitz and Bernig, eds., *Deutsch-Deutsches Literaturexil*, 70. Translation from German by the author.

³²⁷ "Gegenstimmen-Extra," in *Gegenstimmen: Solidarität mit der demokratischen und sozialistischen Opposition in Osteuropa*, 1. Translation from German by the author.

³²⁸ Cooper, "The Western Connection," 74.

nicate with the people, but still there are conceptual displacements.”³²⁹ Here, language became not just a communicative medium but a symbol of political, cultural, and societal difference. “Hardly any two literatures are more distant from one another than those into the two halves of Germany, of which one can say in sentimental moments that they speak the same language,” Böll declared. Just as Germany was divided into two, the “language is separated in two halves that have as little to do with one another as the two economic systems”; their common origin only distanced them “further than French is from English.”³³⁰ What Böll touches upon here is the perception of a thoroughly divided Germany, each with different languages, worlds, and value systems that regularly caused misunderstandings.

Jürgen Beckelmann even went so far as to argue that not even the spoken language served as a common basis for German-German communication: “[o]ccasionally it appears as if there did not only exist two literatures but two colloquial languages.”³³¹ Some believed the two literary scenes had drifted apart and were irrevocably divided. Reiner Kunze pointed out in 1978, after having been forcefully driven out of the GDR and having lived in the Federal Republic, that there existed “a fundamental difference between an East German taking refuge in West Germany and [...] a Russian settling in Paris. ‘I have not changed my country, only my state. I am a German, I have not moved to a foreign country.’”³³² Yet at the same time, he acknowledged the pain the border between both German states caused him: “[t]he border that divides Germany also divides me.”³³³

Others aimed to counteract this idea and specifically stressed the continuities and the centuries-old tradition of a common language and a common literary market. Böll remembered Lev Kopelew’s approach to German-German literature. “This unwilling émigré,” he said, “who is also friends with GDR authors,” even those who still lived in East

³²⁹ Böll, *Heinrich Böll und die DDR: Eine Dokumentation*, 35.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

³³¹ Beckelmann, “....schnürt sich selbst die Kehle zu.” Sprachregelung in der DDR, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 17, 1971. HU OSA 300-3-1: 12, German Affairs, East German Subject Files-Culture, Literature, Critics, Pen, 801, Culture-Awards 1967–1973. Records of Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

³³² Bertoud, “A Lovelier World Now,” 16.

³³³ *Ibid.*

Germany, "is in a remarkable way all-German [...] He never perceived the two literatures as separated entities, and whenever he defended German culture he equally defended GDR authors and communist authors of the old type."³³⁴ Authors such as Kopelew tried to mediate between the two literary worlds, attempting to penetrate not only the Berlin Wall but the Iron Curtain as a whole. However, the increasing destabilization of the Iron Curtain by means of literary goods and ideas was accompanied by a biased attitude towards Western agency.

Belinda Cooper, a former West German contact of the oppositional organization Arche, recalls the largely ambivalent relationship between activists on both sides of the Wall. She argues that assistance from Western activists, émigrés, and media always met with "a level of distrust that cannot entirely be blamed on secret police intrigue."³³⁵ Kunze's most serious problem was "the very intensity of interest in him and his work" in the West.³³⁶ Inside the GDR he had to defend his literature against political attacks and fight hard not to become a professional exile. Although acknowledging the qualitative difference between literary freedom in East and West Germany, Kunze considered the West German attitude similarly critical: "there is so much *business* in the West. It's no laughing matter."³³⁷ *Tamizdat* activity across the German-German border was as complex and problematic as literary contacts across the larger Iron Curtain. While the physical transfer of literary goods and the subsequent publication of East German literature through West German publishing houses worked rather smoothly, a suspicious attitude towards West German activism existed until the end of socialism. Nevertheless, the GDR's literary underground succeeded in employing the means and spaces to counteract the isolationist media policy of the GDR.

³³⁴ "Heinrich Boell about Lev Kopelev," Weekend Supplement of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 12, 1981. HU OSA 300-80-8: 3, Soviet Red Archives, Non-USSR Biographical Files. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

³³⁵ Cooper, "The Western Connection," 74.

³³⁶ Bertoud, "A Lovelier World Now," 16.

³³⁷ Cited in *ibid.*

LITERARY DIPLOMACY AND THE TAMIZDAT CONNECTION

Just as diplomats and embassies played a crucial role in producing a common space of German-German literature, Solzhenitsyn recognized the “kindhearted foreigners [who] feel unable to refuse the call to serve as secret couriers, illegal though that may be,” who helped extract his work from the Soviet Union, noting that “the same is true of diplomats.”³³⁸ Solzhenitsyn used the American diplomats Axel and Jacqueline Kraze, who were able to receive mail free from postal controls, to smuggle his works out of the Soviet Union.³³⁹ Many manuscripts found their way out through foreign newspaper or radio correspondents such as Robert Kaiser of *The Washington Post*, Hedrick Smith of *The New York Times*, or Stig Frederikson of the Scandinavian press agencies. The latter even smuggled Solzhenitsyn’s Nobel Prize speech out of the country. “[T]hese meetings were indispensable to me,” Solzhenitsyn recalls in his memoir *Invisible Allies*, “I could not even live without them. How could I have existed for nine years without any direct personal contact with anyone from the West? It gave me an unprecedented degree of maneuverability and a rapid means of getting materials abroad.”³⁴⁰ Frederikson passed along “little rolls of film, new works, and new variants of existing ones,” transferring them “in the diplomatic bag.”³⁴¹ Although not personally acquainted with the people behind the diplomatic channel, Solzhenitsyn nevertheless used these means which he called the GNR—the Great Northern Route:

I have noticed an amazing change in people educated in the West, who have come into contact with our movement: they leave their mercenary habits behind and are ready to risk their necks [...]. In Russia, despite Soviet oppression, there has long been a field tugging us in the direction of generosity and self-sacrifice, and it is this force that is communicated to certain Westerners and takes hold of them—perhaps not for all time but at least while they are among us.³⁴²

³³⁸ Solzhenitsyn, *Invisible Allies*, 257.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 252.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 256.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 257, 265.

While Solzhenitsyn refers in particular to the engagement of certain individuals who dared to take the risks of smuggling literature, there were also more formalized forms of ambassadorial support. While these ambassadorial politics could not have been realized without key personalities, the support of underground writers by American diplomats was often part of the country's official cultural policy during the Cold War.

During the communist period, Western embassies in the 'Other Europe' were seen by communist officials as a nucleus of capitalist and bourgeois culture, representing a danger to the cultural system of the Soviet Union. Although embassies were closely observed by the KGB and bugged by the Russian secret service, they were legally part of the home country's territory and therefore could not be entered by Soviet officials without permission. For this reason, embassies such as the German embassy in Prague could serve, in the summer of 1989, thousands of East Germans tourists who chose not to go home but instead to stay in the garden of the West German embassy. As they were under special protection inside the embassy, these tourists could not be sent back to the GDR, and used this opportunity to emigrate to West Germany.

The cause of underground writers could take various forms. As discussed in the West German case, ambassadorial libraries were especially relevant in so far as they provided great amounts of Western journals and newspapers that were normally not accessible to readers inside the Soviet Bloc. Jean-Yves Potel, a former French diplomat in Warsaw, estimates that Western cultural institutes and embassies carried a broad variety of political and literary writings: "[e]verything was readable. [...] In fact, from the mid-1970s, the cultural services of France and the UK were places where you could find almost everything and where many contacts could be established because the directors of the institutes were smart."³⁴³ Apart from offering uncensored libraries, embassies served as meeting points for the opposition and Western activists, as centers for cross-border community building, and as the first contact address for individuals who planned to emigrate.

The activity of embassies was not always identical, however. In general, their official role in the support of banned authors was rather minor. Potel contrasts the contribution of Western embassies to the engagement of individuals working there. "I think this role was officially very

³⁴³ Email from Jean-Yves Potel to the author, October 26, 2006. Translation from French by the author.

low," he recalls. "Almost no embassy as such helped dissidents" officially, although he acknowledges that "in each embassy diplomats, cultural, or local staff helped individually."³⁴⁴ Potel doubts the embassies ever officially acknowledged any contact with the literary opposition: "[c]ontacts existed of course, in all countries, but they were rarely invited officially; these were always discreet contacts."³⁴⁵ When they did exist, Potel recalls that they often involved unpleasant consequences: "[t]hese invitations (more common on the American side) were always subject to official protests and scandals by the local authorities."³⁴⁶ While not overstating the contribution of diplomatic institutions and their employees to establishing a literary community that spanned the Iron Curtain, I nevertheless identify several remarkable exceptions that give us an idea of the possible room for action.

A number of ambassadors and cultural attachés, often independently of their official role inside the embassies, became personally involved in the plight of underground activists by serving as literary couriers. It was Solzhenitsyn's experience that as an underground writer, one could seldom trust official embassies as they were often infiltrated by spies, but individuals working in embassies were willing to take great risks in order to guarantee the secure transfer of literature:

[w]hereas Soviet diplomats abroad are, almost to a man, just so many government spies, while Western embassies in Moscow are loyal and ineffectual, individual members of staff and diplomats at the embassies have feelings and a sense of justice that impel them to help us in our miserable plight.³⁴⁷

Ivan Klíma remembers his early conviction that the diplomatic post presented one of the few secure ways to circumvent official censorship and the risk of losing sent items. "From the beginning of the seventies," he wrote, "we had to solve the problem of getting our manuscripts abroad and how, vice versa, to get thing we urgently needed: letters, contracts, books, and honoraria." For Klíma a "secure way meant diplomatic mail."³⁴⁸

Against this background, the Russian underground writer Vladimir Maximov's 1978 appeal to Jimmy Carter, the president of the United

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Solzhenitsyn, *Invisible Allies*, 257.

³⁴⁸ Klíma, "Domino Illustrissimo," 172. Translation from German by the author.

States, is easily understood. Maximov informed Carter that “the United States ambassador in Moscow, Mr. Toon, has categorically prohibited embassy personnel and all persons having access to the embassy from using diplomatic channels for the conveyance of any sort of personal letters or literature which the Moscow authorities might regard as anti-Soviet.”³⁴⁹ Knowing the new direction of Carter’s foreign policy, which cast human rights causes as the basic principle of his new political strategy towards the Soviet Union, Maximov appealed to Carter to rethink the embassy’s new rules:

[b]ut in a country in which any sort of modestly forthright letter or book is adjudged to be a fitting object of enquiry by the courts, the decision of ambassador Toon can only be interpreted as yet another censorship measure, if not worse. It is not secret to anyone that under the conditions [existing] in a totalitarian society, the diplomatic pouch remains the one and only reliable means of communication between those who struggle for the cause of human rights in their country.³⁵⁰

The use of the diplomatic post for the transfer of anti-Soviet literature to the West was prohibited and therefore restricted to the unofficial sphere. If an individual diplomat used the diplomatic channels to smuggle out literary material, he or she was held responsible as a private citizen.

While a literary reading with American writers or a theater performance in an official theater could be perceived as the result of the official cultural diplomacy of a certain country, it was far more difficult to argue convincingly for the legality of literary smuggling. For this reason, the diplomat William Luers, who served as the United States ambassador to Czechoslovakia,³⁵¹ was firm in his decision not to smuggle literature, while his wife, on the other hand, would occasionally take out a

³⁴⁹ “Letter by Vladimir Maximov to the President of the United States, Jimmy Carter.” January 17, 1978. F83.2.2. “George Bailey” Collection. Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Bremen, Historical Archive.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Apart from having worked at the U.S. embassy in Czechoslovakia, William Luers served as U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela (1978–1982) and held numerous posts in Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union and in the Department of State, where he was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe (1977–1978) and for Inter-American Affairs (1975–1977). He later became the director of the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

piece or two. “Bill was very clear that he was not going to smuggle any manuscripts out,” Wendy Luers recalls. “I was not so strict, but I did not tell, and I took my passport and I could get out, and then we could get the manuscripts out.”³⁵² Wendy Luers explains that there was an official agreement with the American State Department not to smuggle anything, so as not to violate diplomatic accords. However, several diplomats functioned as literary couriers:

[t]he *samizdat* went out every way you could possibly imagine and other diplomats, I am sure, were smuggling *samizdat* out as well, but we officially did not. I did [so] unofficially, but we did not do it officially at all. It’s really important that the American embassy had a rule that you should not smuggle anything.³⁵³

Despite official regulations, a small number of courageous ambassadors aligned themselves with human rights activists and underground writers. They could only perform their ambassadorial duties, they believed, through combining their official duties with a personal engagement in the plight of oppressed cultural activists. Engaged diplomats contacted *samizdat* authors and sent their work to Western publishers through diplomatic channels. They often also smuggled uncensored manuscripts to the West on their trips abroad.

One of “invisible allies” that Solzhenitsyn describes in his autobiography of the same title was an unknown contact at the French embassy whom he dubbed “Vasya,” and who in the years following 1971 served as his “main, permanently open channel to the West.”³⁵⁴ Through the embassy, many of his manuscripts reached the West undiscovered. Solzhenitsyn kept two independent lines of communication open, as this helped guarantee uninterrupted transfer even if one of the lines was blocked. Another independent contact was the French cultural attaché in Moscow, Stepan Tatishchev, a second-generation émigré. Although he had already served for some time as a literary courier, he was much more efficient while stationed in Moscow as cultural attaché in 1971. Solzhenitsyn remembers his excitement at having “a trustworthy, reliable channel permanently open to us and for three whole years—that

³⁵² Wendy Luers, interview by the author.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ When Solzhenitsyn met Vasya years later in Paris, he found out that she was a woman as well as a Catholic nun. See Solzhenitsyn, *Invisible Allies*, 216.

was something we had never expected!”³⁵⁵ Solzhenitsyn adds the important detail that Tatishchev did his job as a courier “with no one at the embassy aware of what was going on.”³⁵⁶ Potel, too, remembers his own (unofficial) use of the diplomatic post for securing the arrival of certain important texts to the West. He stresses that his behavior was in no way representative of the ambassadorial tasks, as the ambassador had not given his approval: “I used the French diplomatic post to transfer texts, photos, or movies, but it was with the help of friends and without the consent of the ambassador.”³⁵⁷

Wolfgang Scheur, a German cultural attaché to the German embassy in Prague for most of the 1980s, and his wife Brigitte smuggled a great deal of literature between the Czechoslovak exile community in Germany and the literary underground in Prague—most likely with the tacit approval of the the German ambassador Klaus Meyer, who himself smuggled literature to the West.³⁵⁸ Soon after his arrival in Prague, Scheur established personal contacts with writers and activists in the underground. His ‘private’ activities differed from Luers’ ‘official’ tasks. In a farewell note from 1986, Scheur explains that his personal drive to become a literary courier had very little to do with his official job: “what I did was out of my own motivation. [...] That was my completely private matter [...] Nobody gave me any orders.” His boss tolerated his “ad hoc activity,” but his activity was not to be misinterpreted as any kind of “bias of the foreign office towards the dissidents in the CSSR!”³⁵⁹ Scheur helped send letters through the German Foreign Office to the German embassy in Prague using his diplomatic postal privileges. Besides these mailing projects Scheur occasionally transported heavier loads of *samizdat* documents to Germany, employing his “immunity from customs inspection at the frontier” and returning with a car laden with Western books.³⁶⁰ He often stopped by a little bookshop in Weiden, the Galerie-Antiquariat Schlegl, where he unloaded

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 259.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Email from Jean-Yves Potel.

³⁵⁸ See Prečan and Uhde, eds., *Im Dienst der gemeinsamen Sache*. The book is bilingual. His diary is printed under the title “Unterwegs: Notizen aus Prag 1981–1989” and gives some insight into the difficulties he faced in keeping the channels of communication between Germany and Prague open.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 278.

³⁶⁰ Skilling, “Archive of Freedom,” 394.

his precious literary cargo and received in return newly arrived Czech émigré literature.³⁶¹

Together with Šiklová in Prague and Prečan in Hannover, Scheur established one of the largest communicative channels through which manuscripts and letters of underground writers reached the West. This community was above all engaged in furthering the transfer of *samizdat* and underground writings across the Iron Curtain. Initially providing Czech readers with Western literature represented the objective of literary transfers. Aside from interested readers who came to visit embassy libraries, Scheur remembers people simply coming to his office and asking politely to borrow journals that were not obtainable inside Czechoslovakia: “[w]ith great regularity, older people in general asked me for literature, mostly apolitical, but nevertheless forbidden journals, in order to bring some color to the grey daily life of their families.”³⁶² In 1984, Scheur was able to provide Czech readers with an entire collection of censored German books:

During one special occasion (it seems to me it was 1984) I took advantage of the moving of a colleague of good faith, in order to truck “the remainder of my books” from Germany to Prague. Thus, literature of various schools of thought stood in piles in my office. In the course of a few weeks acquaintances helped themselves at will, so that the generous donation of the distant sponsor would be soon distributed.³⁶³

From 1984 onwards Scheur took over the function of literary courier from his predecessor at the embassy, Joachim Dost. Jiřina Šiklová remembers that

[e]very once in a while Wolfgang Scheur passed by my apartment in the Klimentstka, rang the bell, and left, after his charming “Dobry den, byabytschko,” a bag full of journals and books behind. [...] And all this is forgotten, because it is not recorded in any reports and telegrams of politicians. Even though it was especially this type of diplomatic activity [...] that

³⁶¹ Hubert Schlegl is briefly mentioned in Prečan, “Anlage: Briefwechsel Prag–Hannover 1983,” 284–85.

³⁶² Prečan and Uhde, *Im Dienst der gemeinsamen Sache*, 90–91.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 105.

perhaps contributed more to the perforation of the Iron Curtain than any other form of diplomatic negotiations.³⁶⁴

The transfer channel could also reverse the course. German diplomatic cars, for instance, came from Prague to pick up ordered goods. A German expellee still remembers the arrival of these cars and their cross-border activities in a Bavarian border town: “[t]here were always diplomats from all over the world. They came from Prague and they were allowed to park anywhere. There was a fantastic deli shop in Weiden where they went shopping or had a meal. They could afford everything.”³⁶⁵ The Bavarian bookseller Schlegl remembers the diplomats’ particular interest in books, which they loaded into their diplomatic vehicles. He remembers that he sometimes did not even know what was in the parcels.³⁶⁶ Schlegl developed a close smuggling network with important publishing houses in the West. He established contacts with the documentation center in Scheinfeld run by Karl Schwarzenberg and Vilém Prečan, and with Josef Škvorecký’s and Zdena Salivarová’s Sixty-Eight Publishers: “[c]ontacts to Prague were based on the transfer of literature” to Czechoslovakia, he contends. Books that he ordered from the publishing houses were then “brought to the Prague German embassy in several ways.”³⁶⁷ With the help of diplomats Schlegl managed to penetrate one of the local Iron Curtains, the physical border between Bohemia and Bavaria, by establishing contact with Prague:

[w]e are interested in literature and that was actually our main aim, to bring literature—modern literature—to Bavaria. And what could have been better than new releases, authors that just came from the Frankfurt Book Fair! Then in the spring, when the spring releases appeared, we initiated a literary autumn and spring book week. And the contacts with the publishers were very helpful. We could bring the authors here. The whole phalanx of modern literature came to Weiden, and from this the *Literaturtage*, the literary days, developed.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁴ Šiklová, “Anmerkungen zu den Notizen aus Prag von Wolfgang Scheur ‘Unterwegs,’” 201. Translation from German by the author.

³⁶⁵ “Dora” interview by Markus Meinke, May 27, 2011. Archive of the author.

³⁶⁶ Schlegl, interview by author.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

The Weidener Literaturtage, initiated in 1985, offered authors from Czechoslovakia the opportunity to present their works to a Western audience even before the Bloc's collapse. In addition to public literary readings, many Western publishers sent forbidden literature to Schlegl's private home in Weiden, which he then distributed to key centers in Czechoslovakia.³⁶⁹ These literary transfers and the bookseller's efforts to invite Czechoslovak authors for readings contributed to the substantial presence of modern Czechoslovak literature in Weiden. Having a shared border with a West European country made it an obvious smuggling destination.

In contrast to such individual activity, diplomats used their status as ambassadors to spread forms of cultural diplomacy that counteracted neither their countries' official policy nor their individual beliefs.³⁷⁰ During the Cold War in particular, cultural diplomacy was instrumental in shedding positive light on the country to be represented from the other side of the Iron Curtain.³⁷¹ American diplomats carried considerable weight in forming and implementing Cold War policies which opposed communism and the Soviet Union. Ambassadors from the United States were often supported by the CIA in implementing a wide-range of cultural programs that promoted all spheres of American culture, in order to confront the communist officials with a cultural variety that could only emerge in a free and democratic society. Simultaneously, diplomats were supposed to maintain good relations with the officials of the host country.

While the notion of cultural diplomacy originally referred to the official cultural policies of embassies inside the host country, embassies and ambassadors often employed channels of communication that went beyond or even stood in opposition to the embassy's official tasks. An important means of exercising this diplomacy was to offer a broad variety of cultural activities at the embassies and thereby to influence art, literature, and other cultural spheres in the host country. Embassies both introduced their own culture to the receptive country and mirrored the host country's culture back to their home country.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Krenn, *Fall-Out Shelters for the Human Spirit*; Wagenleitner, *American Cultural Diplomacy*; Ninkovich, *U.S. Information Policy and Cultural Diplomacy*; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*; Prevots, *Dance for Export*; Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*. For early examples of cultural diplomacy see Nicholas, "Fellow Travellers."

³⁷¹ Liska, "The Politics of 'Cultural Diplomacy,'" 532.

Diplomats who were connected to the American embassy in Prague invited a wide range of American writers, actors, and artists to their premises, as well as many underground writers and oppositionists. Wendy and William Luers's story offers an insight into the double role American diplomats negotiated between officialdom and the literary underground. Before tracing their involvement with underground activists, it needs to be pointed out that the general attitude of American diplomats towards the non-official spheres inside the Eastern Bloc was complicated. Embassies were meant to work towards a better partnership with the host country; hence, the ambassador could not openly show his sympathy towards oppressed artists and writers. In the worst case, such unofficial contacts could cause serious trouble for the ambassador. The responsible diplomat could be listed as a *persona non grata* and would need to leave the country.

In his autobiography *Nezhelannoe puteshestvie v Sibir (Involuntary Journey to Siberia)* Andrei Amalrik describes a meeting between William Luers and Soviet dissidents.³⁷² One evening in early 1965, Robert J. Korengold, a Moscow correspondent of *Newsweek*, and William Luers, at the time a young American officer, paid him a visit. Later that night the doorbell rang, and they were interrupted by four KGB men who asked Amalrik about his relations to the Americans: “[s]o that’s who your friends are,” said the KGB man portentously [...] ‘Have you been in contact with them long?’”³⁷³ After explaining that the Americans had come to see his modern art collection Amalrik refused to write down their names or reveal the purpose of their visit. After threatening him, the KGB left him with the feeling that his contacts with foreigners and especially American diplomats would have serious consequences: “I knew that I had been watched for a fairly long time, evidently on the simple assumption that, since I knew foreigners on the one hand and was friendly with ‘modernist’ artists on the other, I must surely work as an intermediary between them.”³⁷⁴ Amalrik feared that he would be charged with criminal activity and that Luers will think that he would “be used in some way against him, or say something to his disadvantage on the basis of which he could be declared *persona non grata*.”³⁷⁵ Nothing of the sort happened, and Luers kept in touch with Amalrik. During his stay as a foreign officer in Moscow

³⁷² Amalrik, *Involuntary Journey to Siberia*.

³⁷³ Ibid., 10–11.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 7–8.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 17.

between 1960 and 1966 Luers continued to support writers and artists despite the possible dangers involved in such contacts. This early incident in Moscow reveals Luers's cavalier attitude about his appearance in the eyes of the officials. His time in Moscow, as well his contacts with other oppressed artists and writers during his term in Venezuela (1978–1982), influenced his decision to pursue a different kind of cultural diplomacy.

In contrast to her husband's diplomatic career, Wendy Luers's path towards supporting underground writers developed differently. "[M]y background was human rights and journalism," she says, "but I'd also been very involved in San Francisco with the various museums and painters." In Venezuela the couple undertook their brand of cultural diplomacy, inviting American artists, writers, and intellectuals to the country.³⁷⁶ Her experience with torture testimonies from 126 victims during her stay in Venezuela taught her to be alert towards "the horrors of what goes on."³⁷⁷ In a 2005 interview Wendy Luers draws an "enlightened" image about what she saw was her moral obligation. It arose "out of five years both as a journalist, which I was for many years, and then working for Amnesty [International] and understanding how important getting information out is and shedding the light to the dark corners."³⁷⁸ Communicating across ideological and mental borders was a core element of Wendy Luers's understanding of her professional contribution. Independent of the country and the time, she tried to keep this promise, arguing that "this historical part is important because it is why people are linkages."³⁷⁹ Had they not been confronted with the oppression of writers and artists so early on in their careers, Luers doubts that she and her husband would have been open to functioning as intermediaries between the official and the non-official spheres inside the Soviet Bloc.³⁸⁰

But it was not only an interest in the non-official sphere of literature and art that motivated them. William Luers seems to have been particularly interested in modern art and writing, and he motivated artists that were officially not recognized. Amalrik was impressed by Luers's understanding of art, declaring that "unlike many foreigners in Moscow, who buy pictures by Russian painters, he won me over by his genuine love

³⁷⁶ Wendy Luers, interview by the author.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

and understanding of art.”³⁸¹ Luers’s sincere interest in art extended to the political sphere and embraced a broad variety of cultural tasks:

because he was so interested in writing and painting and sculpture and everything else is the reason that he was also assigned, even though he was not a cultural affairs officer, he was a political affairs officer. He was assigned to take painters, writers, etc. around on the first openings of the first exchanges and that [included] Richard Diebenkorn, who was one of the great American painters, Edward Albee, and John Steinbeck. Really he found an extraordinary group of people and they came from the United States, paid for by embassy money for exchanges with the Russians.³⁸²

Edward Albee, the American playwright who performed in Prague in the 1980s and had been a close friend of Luers since an early visit to Moscow, described Luers’s conviction to secure art in dictatorships as one that served to ensure “the safety of the arts in difficult countries.” At his embassy parties, he would “shake things up as much as he possibly could, have parties at the embassy residence with the good guys and the Stalinists. Stalinists would be at one table and the good guys would be at another table. It was nice having everybody in the same room.”³⁸³ When the Luers went to Prague, the Counselor for Public Affairs, William (Bill) Kiehl, introduced them to the unofficial art and literature scene, as Kiehl personally knew “literally every dissident that was in town.”³⁸⁴ Wendy Luers remembers that “the first thing that Bill as an ambassador asked Bill Kiel was to introduce us to as many of these people as he possibly could. So, he had a reception for us at his apartment, in his new wife’s apartment, and they were all there.”³⁸⁵

Despite their belief in working closely with unrecognized artists and writers, Wendy Luers points out that they were nevertheless aware of the great divide between being active as an independent person and as an officially sent diplomat: “[t]hey’re very different people, human rights

³⁸¹ Amalrik, *Involuntary Journey to Siberia*, 18.

³⁸² Wendy Luers, interview by author.

³⁸³ Edward, Albee. Video interview at *Havel at Columbia Interviews*.

³⁸⁴ Wendy Luers, interview by author.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

activists and ambassadors are very, very different worlds.”³⁸⁶ There were limitations to their activities, despite the dangers they took, and they always risked losing their job or endangering the diplomatic balance of American-Czechoslovak relations. For this reason, many diplomats avoided direct contact with banned authors. They “were very afraid to be in touch with the dissidents unless they were assigned as sort of a human rights officer,” Wendy Luers recalls, because “you are assigned to the government and your job is to be involved with the government, you need to be appointed to the government.”³⁸⁷ The American ambassador Mark Palmer, who was appointed to the American embassy in Moscow in the 1960s and later to the American embassy in Hungary, formulated his personal doubts about smuggling Soviet literature through the ambassadorial post:

I was one of those diplomats in Moscow in the late 1960s and was directly responsible for dealing with dissidents, Jews, actors, writers, and others the Communist Party oppressed. I vividly recall my own uncertainty about whether I could admit to my superiors that I was smuggling out dissident literature, so-called *samizdat* through the diplomatic pouch.³⁸⁸

Aware of the difficult double role of diplomats, Ivan Klíma formulated the important role embassies played in supporting the cause of banned authors:

I would like to emphasize [...] that it was above all the representatives of several countries, who despite all the official agreements and the diplomatic protocol, extended to us their sympathies, their support and their interest, who offered us their helping hand whenever needed. These were the representatives of the United States of America, of the Federal Republic of Germany, and of the United Kingdom.³⁸⁹

There were major differences in the activities of the various Western embassies in Prague. Wendy Luers recalls that the German embassy’s

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Palmer, “Testimony by Ambassador Mark Palmer.”

³⁸⁹ Klíma, “The Unexpected Merits of Oppression,” 41.

support of oppressed intellectuals was openly known, and that their activities included using the ambassadorial post for the transmission of writings out of the country: "the Germans did see them and they did help to get the manuscripts out. However, they did not have officers assigned to dissidents."³⁹⁰ She stresses the ambassador's direct engagement in the cause of literary smuggling: "[y]our ambassador, his name was Meyer, was absolutely fabulous. He smuggled manuscripts all the time. He was absolutely great."³⁹¹ In contrast to the German embassy, Wendy Luers thought the British embassy was only indirectly involved in dealing with the underground scene: "[t]he Brits had officers assigned to the dissidents, but [...] they told us that their foreign office had told them that they could not have dissidents for dinner," instead "they would come to our house, our residence, and have a dinner with the dissidents."³⁹² When meeting the former British foreign secretary Sir Jeffrey Howe in Britain in the early 1990s, Wendy Luers confronted him with the former policy of the British embassy towards the unofficial political and literary activists:

I was at the meeting in England at Dichley, the big international conference center. And Sir Jeffrey Howe was there, and he had been a foreign officer at that time. And I said, Sir Jeffrey, did you tell your ambassadors that they could not have dinner with the dissidents? And he said [...] they were afraid of offending the government.³⁹³

As it was necessary to keep good political and economic relations with the official government, embassies had to remain in the official sphere. This required a difficult balancing act from those who dared to stay in touch with oppressed cultural activists:

we did not like what they [the officials] were doing; we were trying to produce an area of freedom and the point is at the same time when we were doing that we also knew many official names, they wanted trade, they wanted relationships, they had to have

³⁹⁰ Wendy Luers, interview by the author.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

relationships with the United States, and had to have the relationships with Germany. So, you were kind of schizophrenic.³⁹⁴

In order to serve as a bridge between the two spheres of art and culture, it was necessary to find a way that did not infuriate officials. Sometimes, however, people risked confrontation with representatives of official Czechoslovak culture. One of these occasions took place when the American embassy invited guests for the celebration of American Independence Day:

We [...] had 2500 Czechs and Slovaks on our lawn for the Fourth of July, in 1985. All, every single *Charter 77* signatory, Havel, Hajek etc., and we served American ice cream [...] And it was fabulous and of course they were all interviewed by the civil police as they left, straight in the middle of the day, and then the Czechoslovak government called the American government and made a formal protest.³⁹⁵

This event had consequences that affected the Luers during a visit in Washington shortly afterwards, when the Czechoslovak ambassador to the United States confronted William Luers. Instead of changing his course of cultural policy, however, Luers remained firm and won the acceptance of officials. During an official meeting between the American deputy secretary and the Czech ambassador, Luers was accused of “associating” with “these people,” meaning the opposition, making it difficult for the Czechoslovak government to deal with the American embassy in Prague. But the American government supported Luers’s strategy of cultural diplomacy and associating himself with people such as Havel. They did not dismiss him when he dared tell the Czechoslovak ambassador to “please have your government not ask me to choose between them and this group.”³⁹⁶ Here, Luers’s knowledge of the full support his policy received from the American government played an important role. He did not act purely as an individual but represented the official position of contemporary American foreign policy. Embassy cultural events were government-sponsored and served American interests. And in so far as the various readings and cul-

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ William Luers, video interview conducted on “Problems with the Czech Government,” *Havel at Columbia Interviews*.

tural events presented the image of a free American culture, they stood in sharp contrast with the closed Czech and Slovak cultures.

Supporting oppressed writers and creating a dialogue between them and American artists was part of the American strategy from the 1950s. The idea of the arts' freedom, which was displayed through readings and theater performances, fitted into the strategy of indirectly undermining totalitarian regimes. The cultural strategy of continuously exhibiting free American culture strengthened the literary and artistic underground in the 'Other Europe':

we represented freedom and that was the important part. So, the embassy depended on the personality of the ambassador and the ability to say, this is the American foreign policy [...] we have moments of *samizdat*, of *perestroika*, we have moments of openness, and we have exhibitions in Russia that have millions of Russians coming to see them. All of these various pieces are the pieces that wove into the fall of the wall.³⁹⁷

Apart from jazz concerts, art festivals, music, and dance performances were independently organized by various American organizations in order to spread American culture in the Eastern Bloc. American embassies, too, organized literary readings with famous American writers, but also theater performances and social gatherings.

As to the question of which American writers or painters were willing to present their work in Prague Wendy Luers recalls that all the artists were part of the same circle of friends: "[i]t was just literally one friend to another friend, to another friend, and we would say to everybody 'come' and [...] we would have a party or have a reading."³⁹⁸ The American embassy in Prague invited such writers as John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut, John Steinbeck, William Styron, Edward Albee, and E. L. Doctorow to give readings. Klíma points to the importance of these literary encounters for understanding the literary and cultural production of the Western intellectual community that was otherwise largely absent from Czechoslovakia:

I recollect above all the period of Mr. William Luers's ambassadorship in Prague. It was on his initiative that those prominent

³⁹⁷ Wendy Luers, interview by the author.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

American writers visited our republic. The meetings with William Styron and his wife Rose, with John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut, E. L. Doctorow, Galeway Kinnell and others, as well as with Mr. and Mrs. Luers, represented for us above all the entry into the free world, the moment of exultation which imbued us with the strength to preserve and enhance our hopes.³⁹⁹

The American embassy organized another key event that brought together both parts of the Czechoslovak cultural landscape in 1985: a theater performance of Sam Shepard's *Hawk Moon*, directed by Edward Albee, at the official Czechoslovak Theater Institute in Prague. William Luers vividly recalls how they invited many of their unofficial Czechoslovak artist friends to this sanctioned theater: "[w]e had only I think fifty or one hundred seats in a small theater so that we could invite other diplomats and our staff. We decided that our one hundred seats would only be from the Czech community whom we adopted from the staff."⁴⁰⁰ The embassy succeeded in gathering a mixture of people that would never have met otherwise in the space of this official theater. Luers contrasts the dissident "play writers and theaters and actors" with "all the officials, people in their suits and ties, people from the theater institute and the old lady with a big key for the door to the theater institute."⁴⁰¹

A small though revealing detail of the event's liminality occurred when the performance was about to start and Edward Albee was locked outside with Václav Havel:

[s]o we all went in and Albee was outside talking to Havel. And this lady would not let him in because he was talking to Havel. So the director of the institute got up and made a speech about the dramaturge, who was going to have a reading of his play. And then there was a dead silence. We just let the silence go. And silence and silence, and finally Bill stood up and said "Mister director, you have locked Mr. Albee out, in the courtyard. So we can't start without him," and [...] they had people get down and get the key and open the door, and in the rush of

³⁹⁹ Klíma, "The Unexpected Merits of Oppression," 41–42.

⁴⁰⁰ William Luers. Video interview for *Havel at Columbia Interviews*.

⁴⁰¹ Wendy Luers, interview by the author.

getting Albee in they slipped Havel in. So Havel was in the back of the room but hidden. But everybody stood around him while Albee did his thing.⁴⁰²

Here, Albee serves as a mediator for Havel. His presence makes Havel's otherwise unimaginable participation possible. The situation becomes even more bizarre when people present at the performance are invited to a private gathering at the embassy after the performance:

afterwards, we had invited the whole group back to the house for dinner. Many of the people came who had been attending the play, the actors, all the officials who had arranged for this and Havel. So at the same buffet Havel was there with these official dramaturges who were running this very conservative theater and who hated him and feared him. And at one end of this circular hall I sat with all the thugs, and on the other end Wendy sat with Havel, and it was an extraordinary evening of mixture, and it really annoyed the officials.⁴⁰³

Describing John Updike's appearance at the embassy in Prague in the mid-1980s Wendy Luers recalls a situation at the bookstore of Karel Čapek, "a very courageous owner of a bookstore" who loved American "literature so much," and where Updike was to sign his books:

of course these authors were published in Czechoslovakia and they were sold out the minute when their books were published. So they could not say that they could not come. There was Updike, Vonnegut in Czech, so it would be announced through the underground and everybody would know everybody else and everybody would be in touch on such a day. Kurt Vonnegut was going to be signing books at the Čapek bookstore. And of course the line would be ten blocks long and everybody would come there with little bags with their books, because there never were any books in that bookstore.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ William Luers. Video interview on "Edward Albee."

⁴⁰⁴ Wendy Luers, interview by the author.

Similar to Albee, Updike's appearance and the publication of his books created an unusual space for discussion that subverted the logic of socialist realism. The American writers whom the Luers invited, and whose books were published officially inside Czechoslovakia, represented everything that banned authors longed for, namely, to be able to write uncensored, to publish officially, to travel, and to present their ideas abroad. The visits of foreign writers threw into relief how restricted the culture of book publishing was inside Czechoslovakia. As Wendy Luers recalls: "[i]t was a completely state-run, closed society, 99.3 percent of everything in the country was owned by the state, every book in Czechoslovakia went on sale at Thursday mornings at 9 o'clock for exactly the same price in every bookstore in the country."⁴⁰⁵ To meet and talk with famous American writers was such a rare opportunity that it superseded the fear of banned artists and authors:

I said we are going to be bringing lots of writers, painters and everybody, do you want us to invite you or are we going to get you into much trouble, and they all said, of course invite us, we are already in so much trouble, it does not make any difference, and on top of that you have whiskey. So that started three years of just every week practically, and I am not exaggerating, every single week we would have somebody staying. And we had Edward Albee, John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut over. I mean really everybody.⁴⁰⁶

Besides this, underground writers could gain rare access to American literature and receive financial and moral support. Edward Albee risked confrontations with the local authorities in Prague, trying in various ways to aid the work of artists under state socialism. Apart from putting on his plays in Czechoslovakia, he financially supported representatives of the banned cultural scene:

during the Soviet time I would do whatever I could, to funnel money [...], especially in the Soviet Union for writers, who were poor and who were not allowed to receive any money, carry messages back and forth, carry manuscripts back and forth, I

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

usually went over on a diplomatic passport. So I was always taking a lot of stuff out, not only from the Soviet Union but from other countries as well, to American publishers and things like that to make things a little easier.⁴⁰⁷

Apart from helping manuscripts cross borders, there were numerous individuals in the West who were simultaneously engaged in fighting for human rights. Many of them sought contact with Western embassies because ambassadors could provide them with access to extensive social networks in both official and non-official spheres. As such, embassies developed into places of encounter between Western human rights activists and underground militants. Wendy Luers remembers how important figures from the emerging human rights organizations such as Robert Bernstein and George Soros came to visit them. As everyone in the network knew of the Luers's presence in Prague it became a common suggestion that "if you are going to come to Prague, you've got to meet them!" The Luers invariably invited everyone who was interested. As they were always followed and their house was bugged, visitors would go out and meet the Czech activists, writers and artists somewhere else.⁴⁰⁸

These early human rights activists met clandestinely with the non-conformist writers, reassuring them, in their isolation, that the work they carried out at such a cost was being recognized. Apart from serving as meeting places for East-West contacts, the embassies enabled Western human rights activists to establish important links:

this is a very, very small world and people know each other. And since we were the American ambassadors, we could pick up the telephone and talk to anybody. And it was not just us, it was everybody who was interested. The whole Helsinki Watch was about publishing, so everybody knew everybody else. And once anybody found out that we were interested, they would contact us and we would contact them and invite them, and everybody had a publisher, and everybody had an agent.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Edward Albee. Interview conducted at *Havel at Columbia Interviews*.

⁴⁰⁸ Wendy Luers, interview by the author.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

As I will discuss it in the next chapter, the circle of friends described here was involved in the struggle for human rights and helped implement the Helsinki Accords by securing the rights of writers inside the Soviet sphere. The variety of these cross-border activities was the multifaceted outcome of a shared discontent with the unnatural separation of Europe's cultures and of the dedication to actively counteract this reality by illegal means. While the core elements of any literary community are, above all, its discourses and ideas, the transfer of books was a precondition for the actual absorption and exchange of ideas evident in the texts themselves. The interest in uncensored literature sparked the same idea in the divided intellectual communities: to destabilize Europe's division through a common, secret sociability. Intellectuals produced and disseminated underground literature in order to form an uncensored community, both inside the 'Other Europe' and across the physical Iron Curtain.

In a 1971 article in *The Observer* Michael Scammell stressed the new belief in this transnational vision. He noted that the conviction that a letter in a bottle could reach an audience and that there "must be people willing to pick it up and read it" reflected a new "confidence in those millions 'outside' and their willingness to help."⁴¹⁰ This new confidence not only mirrored the fact that the media brought about a "new consciousness of our 'global village'" but also deepened the "idea of an international community of interest and spirit" that has always been "particularly strong among creative artists and scholars." Out of their trust that "[a]rt and scholarship know no boundaries" writers and scholars such as Medvedev who were dissatisfied with how the literary markets of their own countries chose to send their books abroad. In doing so, they united "these two strands in the single gesture." By 1971 Scammell felt that all signs pointed to such gestures "increasing in frequency, and the tactic of appealing to colleagues abroad through the media has come to stay."⁴¹¹ Believing in the power of an audience abroad, risky literary transfers mushroomed throughout the Soviet Bloc. Richard N. Dean has shown how from the 1970s onwards "the dissident movement began to turn abroad and to develop Western contacts as a means of support." He was certain that "the unresponsiveness of Soviet authorities to dissident petitions was an important factor in more and more dissidents' decisions to air their grievances before the world" instead of inside their own coun-

⁴¹⁰ Scammell, "The Letter in the Bottle," 10.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

tries, particularly as “Soviet dissidents found the Western press particularly receptive to their appeals.” Whenever repression increased “more and more dissidents came to believe that world public opinion and dissident links to various international organizations were the most effective means of deterring the harassment and persecution of the authorities.”⁴¹²

In order to gain Western publicity non-conformists appealed to a wide variety of Western sources of public opinion. They used press conferences and television interviews to express their ideas or relied on direct appeals to the UN, to Western governments, or to international organizations such as Amnesty International, to the World Council of Churches, and to the Nobel Prize Committee in order to gain support for their causes.⁴¹³ Through personal reports unknown prisoners could directly address the Western media and criticize their own government’s treatment of writers. They achieved a previously unattainable level of power. In this way, they could simultaneously communicate their suffering to those in power and instigate change. But before the complaints could reach their target audiences, ideas about how to promote illegal literary transfers had to be implemented, symbolizing a first, practical step in reconnecting the isolated literary communities.

⁴¹² Dean, “Contacts with the West,” 50.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 51.



Figure 28: Photograph of the Czechoslovak *samizdat* repository, Czechoslovak Documentation Center [Československé dokumentační středisko], in Scheinfeld near Munich. Photograph by Katerina Volková. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.



Figure 29: Photograph of Vilém Prečan at the main entrance of the Czechoslovak Documentation Center in Scheinfeld. Private Archive Vilém Prečan, Prague.

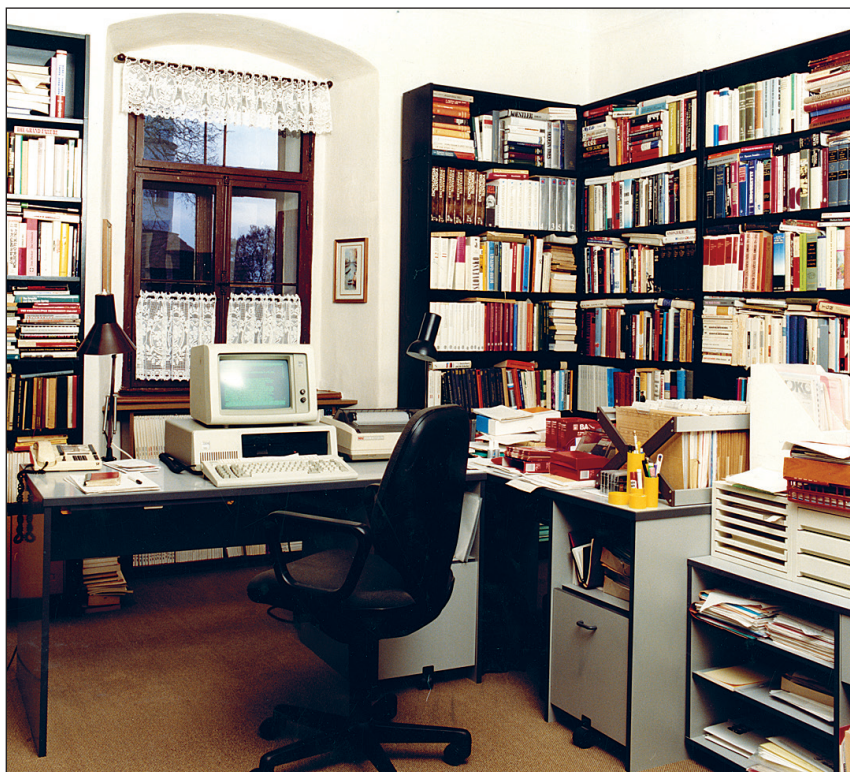


Figure 30: Photograph of Vilém Prečan's office at the Czechoslovak Documentation Center in Scheinfeld. Private Archive, Vilém Prečan, Prague.



Figure 31: Photograph of a *samizdat* shelf at the Czechoslovak Documentation Center in Scheinfeld. Private Archive, Vilém Prečan, Prague.

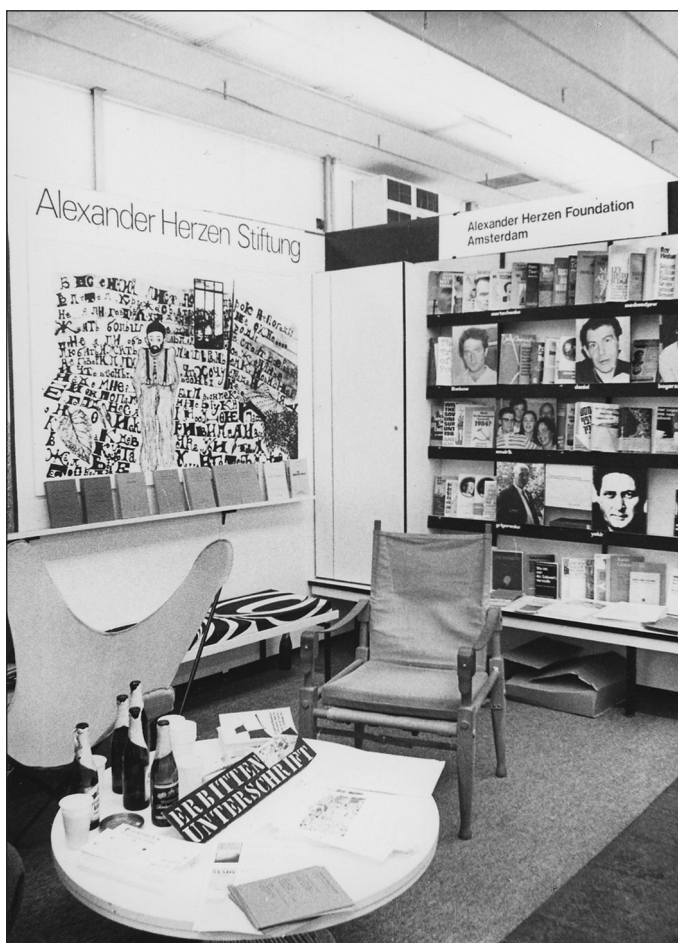


Figure 32: Photograph of the Alexander Herzen Foundation at the Frankfurter Book Fair, October 1973. Archive of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.



Figure 33: Photograph of the “Dissident Literature from the CSSR” booth 1987. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.



Figure 34: Photograph of the “Exhibition of Czechoslovak Exile Publishers (Rozmluvy London, Index Cologne; Sixty-Eight Publishers, Toronto),” 1987. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.



Figure 35: Photograph of the exhibition wall, entitled “The Long Way from *Samizdat* to the Publisher—from the Publisher to the Reader,” 1987. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.



Figure 36: Photograph of the Alternative Cultural Forum, Budapest, October 1985. Guests sitting at the desk: Frantisek Janouch, Attila Ara-Kovács, Mária Kovács. In the background: István Csurka, Aryeh Neier, Sándor Csoóri, János Vargha, János Kenedi, Árpád Göncz, Mihály Vajda, Jeri Laber, Gerald Nagler. HU OSA 318-0-9. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF). Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.



Figure 37: Photograph of the Alternative Cultural Forum, Budapest, October 1985. András Kovács, Per Wästberg, Gáspár Miklós Tamás. HU OSA 318-0-9. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF). Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest

CHAPTER 4

Tamizdat: The Writer's Right to Literature

THE WRITER'S RIGHTS

From the 1950s the basic belief in the necessity of the free flow of books across the Iron Curtain animated various initiatives on both sides of the divide. These schemes, which predated the 1975 Helsinki Accords, explicitly formulated certain rights and lobbied against the persecution of writers in the 'Other Europe.' The rhetoric of rights, including human (and particularly writers') rights,¹ was invoked across the Eastern Bloc countries and their Western counterparts to petition for writers that were censored, imprisoned, pushed out of their jobs, or forced into exile. One of these literary endeavors was the non-governmental organization PEN, which was funded by the US government. Originally, PEN stood for Poets, Essayists, and Novelists, and was later broadened to Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists.² PEN was established in London in 1921 to promote the freedom of expression and to defend writers' rights. The organization was (and still is) particularly active in funding translations from neglected languages. PEN's idea to represent the world community of writers who would jointly fight for "irreproachable goals" such as "peace" and undoing "censorship," was inspired

¹ For a recent study of human rights in the twentieth century see Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*.

² PEN International, "Our History."

by the “achievement of individual writers” who had been “virtuosos of denouncing political and moral infamy,”³ stated Susan Sontag in 1986.

Throughout the following decades various national chapters of PEN were established, including the PEN Center USA in 1943. In reaction to the ideological and political polarization of the post-war world, PEN and its various national chapters gained great political importance. As a result of ideological dissonance, the former all-German PEN split into West German and East German PEN chapters in the early 1950s.⁴ An official Russian PEN chapter was formed only in 1988. In the 1950s the Congress for Cultural Freedom pursued its aim of publishing material in East European languages and in translation. In a published interview Frances Stonor Saunders wondered why the Congress was so keen on funding PEN: “if this organization already exists and is doing its good work, why are they trying to penetrate it, why are they tumbling in with personnel trying to buy in to PEN with quite significant donations to the American Centre”?⁵ She doubted PEN’s political neutrality and justified the option to “defend the altruistic line if you see an organization like PEN” infiltrated by the CIA.⁶ The CIA, which was heavily involved in funding the Congress, even went as far as to support the election of certain personnel to PEN’s organizational structure. They were especially interested in getting Arthur Miller elected president, as they perceived him as a “perfect figurehead” because of his credibility; they wanted to use “him as a kind of bridgehead to get into the Eastern Bloc.”⁷ However, from its very beginning, the Congress failed to some extent in its wish to be the first to support writers and literature from the ‘Other Europe,’ as PEN was leaps ahead of the Congress in terms of its proper exchanges with Eastern Europe.⁸

Eventually, at the thirty-third PEN World Congress in Bled, Slovenia, in 1965, Miller became the first American president of PEN and remained in that position until 1969. In his autobiography entitled

³ Sontag, “When Writers Talk Among Themselves,” BR1.

⁴ On the history of the German PEN chapter see the currently unpublished manuscript by Orzoff, “Taking Up the PEN,” or her forthcoming article “Writing Across the Wall.” See also Hanuschek, *Geschichte des Bundesdeutschen PEN-Zentrums*; Peitsch, “No Politics?,” Bores, *Das Ostdeutsche P.E.N.-Zentrum*; Hanuschek, T. Hoernigk, and Malende, eds., *Schriftsteller als Intellektuelle*.

⁵ Lucas, “Revealing the Parameters of Opinion,” 18.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Reference to Miller in *ibid.*, 19.

⁸ Reference to Miller in *ibid.*, 18.

Timebends, Miller explains that “with an American as president, they thought their cultural independence from the Sovietized East more safely confirmed.”⁹ He had the impression that the decision was not based on more scientific selection criteria, but instead mirrored the fact that organizations like PEN found themselves “in a world of pure symbolism.”¹⁰ While the “long and depressing reports of the Writers in Prison Committee” about human rights abuses and mock trials in communist countries marked PEN congresses of the 1950s, participants of the congress in Bled recall that that year’s event finally reflected the change in atmosphere instituted in the past few years.¹¹ At that congress no resolution dealt with the countries behind the Iron Curtain.

Miller remembers his first impressions of PEN at the congress, which provoked feelings of profound skepticism about the usefulness of such organizations and their large congresses. To Miller “PEN seemed little more than an intricate exercise in diplomacy leavened only by a rare moment or two of frankness,” and he was not unduly pessimistic seeing France, Britain, and West Germany sitting across from East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland. He especially doubted the greater meaning of such intercultural encounters “when the deep moral and political conflicts between them were rarely allowed to surface.” Although personally not “looking for trouble,” he felt it immensely difficult to see how they could do “much bridging of hostile cultures here.”¹² However, just a few days later at the congress’s closing party, Miller altered his impression, deciding that “PEN could be far more than a mere gesture of goodwill.” He became convinced that the writers “had unquestionably responded with an instinctual self-preserving attention” when he had stressed PEN’s aim to “maintain” their “apolitical standards of free expression,” which did not automatically mean staying “out of politics when repression was a political fact.”¹³

Under his guidance and that of the later president Heinrich Böll (1971–74), PEN International battled for writers’ freedom of expression in the Eastern Bloc. Miller, from his personal friendships with non-conformist Soviet writers, understood why writers from the ‘Other Europe’ had been so keen on joining PEN. In their eyes, the organization was

⁹ Miller, *Timebends*, 576.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Macauley, “PEN and the Sword,” BR26.

¹² Miller, *Timebends*, 575.

¹³ Ibid., 578.

“an exciting window on the West with some very practical advantages in view, such as better possibilities of translation into European languages.” Their main interest, however, lay in the much acclaimed “protection of solidarity” that broadened the freedom of expression.¹⁴ Against this background Miller saw his function as the American president of PEN embodied in the following behaviors: “to be fair, to keep the peace, and to persist in apolitically advancing the political concepts of liberty of expression and the independent author.”¹⁵ These aims remained important components of PEN’s philosophy throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Reporting on a PEN congress in France in 1969, Robert Mitgang, an American delegate to PEN International, identified PEN’s organization as a series of “linked centers around the world whose members believe that literature knows no frontiers, that freely exchanged words can be a common currency for peace.”¹⁶ In particular, the personal encounters between Eastern and Western writers through PEN and its meetings were considered a valuable contribution to Europe’s rapprochement. A French participant of the French PEN congress mentioned that “human contact was much more important than all the discussions that could arise,” and it was important to maintain personal relationships both in and outside the congress.¹⁷ Despite, or rather because of, the reality of the Cold War division, which severely affected the literary scene, PEN’s original charter remained highly topical throughout the conflict. Its principle of supporting the “unhampered transmission of thought within each nation and between all nations” and of opposing any suppression of free speech guided this literary institution throughout the Cold War period.¹⁸

During the late 1950s—and especially after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution—PEN gained fame with its support of persecuted writers. After Tibor Déry supported the reformist government of Imre Nagy and was sentenced to nine years imprisonment in 1956, hundreds of writers and artists around the world rallied on his behalf. Déry was charged with having served as head of the Hungarian Writers Association, namely, of the Hungarian chapter of PEN, which was considered to be a threat to the Hungarian state. In 1957, the Hungarian Writers Association is reported to have been dissolved “for making attacks against the country’s

¹⁴ Ibid., 580.

¹⁵ Ibid., 579.

¹⁶ Mitgang, “Writers in the P.E.N,” BR24

¹⁷ Brown, “Miller Opens PEN Congress in France,” 43.

¹⁸ “PEN International CHARTER.”

social order.”¹⁹ In response, the international Tibor Déry Committee was founded, which published letters and petitioned the Hungarian authorities in support of imprisoned Hungarian writers.²⁰ The best known international public appeal for Hungarian writers after 1956 was the Committee's publication *For Tibor Déry and the Other 24 Hungarian Intellectuals in Prison* (1959),²¹ which appeared in book form and in such major Western newspapers as *Le Monde*.²² Shortly after the appeal, Déry and other writers were released under the amnesty of 1960, which marked the fifteenth anniversary of Hungary's liberation from Nazi occupation by the Red Army.²³ In the same year of Déry's release, PEN International set up a Writers in Prison Committee which was tasked with responding to the practice—confined not only to the Soviet Bloc—of silencing the voices of critical writers and thinkers. In particular, the committee defended the rights of imprisoned writers and supported their families financially.

A year later the British lawyer Peter Benenson founded Amnesty International (AI), one of the most influential human rights organizations. Referring to the release of prisoners as an efficient way of promoting the rights of imprisoned writers, he paved the way towards a new public awareness of human rights abuses around the world.²⁴ In his famous article on “The Forgotten Prisoners” in *The Observer* on May 28, 1961, Benenson directly calls on readers to “[o]pen your newspaper any day of the week and you will find a report from somewhere in the world of someone being imprisoned, tortured or executed because his opinions or religion are unacceptable to his government.”²⁵ Benenson puts, himself in the psychological situation of the reader, stating that “[t]he newspaper reader feels a sickening sense of impotence.” But he imagines what would happen “if these feelings of disgust all over the world could be united into common action.” He was convinced that something could be done. Animated by Voltaire's maxim that “I detest your views, but

¹⁹ “Hungary Bars Group.”

²⁰ Christofferson, “French Intellectuals and the Repression of the Hungarian Revolution,” 270.

²¹ Tibor Déry Committee, *For Tibor Déry and the Other 24 Hungarian Intellectuals in Prison*.

²² Macher, “Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy,” 102.

²³ “Hungary Frees Authors Jailed After 56 Revolt,” 3.

²⁴ Benenson, “The Forgotten Prisoners,” 23. For a broad introduction to the work of Amnesty International see Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame*, 2006.

²⁵ Benenson, “The Forgotten Prisoners,” 23.

am prepared to die for your right to express them,”²⁶ Benenson joined forces with a group of London lawyers, writers, and publishers to set up an office to gather facts about human rights violations. Benenson remembers the “exhilarating, brief springtime in the early Sixties, when after rebuilding the cities we set about reshaping the world.”²⁷

AI based its claim for the freedom of thought, opinion, and expression on the United Nations’s 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It aimed to organize amnesty for “prisoners of conscience” by mobilizing international public opinion. While the institution was originally British, an international secretariat was established in 1963. Benenson “invited readers to contact his office, to learn more, and to write letters to urge the release of the ‘prisoners of conscience’ named in the article.”²⁸ Since then, AI’s major activity has consisted of writing personal letters to governments and officials, asking for the release of prisoners all over the world.

A year after its establishment in 1962, AI founded the Fund for the Persecuted as a relief arm to raise money and to support prisoners and their relatives around the world. The fund was later renamed as the Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund. For AI a prisoner of conscience was “any person who is physically restrained (by imprisonment or otherwise) from expressing (in any form of words or symbols) any opinion which he honestly holds and which does not advocate or condone personal violence.”²⁹ The appeal was run by the Prisoners of Conscience Committee. In its first report on torture in 1973, AI stated that in the face of so much brutality, it had to publicly reassert its core belief in the value of every man, woman and child, and the inviolability of human dignity, according to which nobody should be made to suffer for holding or expressing personal opinions. In consequence, “torture must be recognized for the evil that it is, the public mobilized and international and domestic machinery set up to bring it to an end.”³⁰

To obtain trustworthy information on prisoners of conscience and human rights abuses inside the Soviet Bloc, Amnesty relied on letters and reports from behind the Iron Curtain. In particular, *samizdat* was

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Benenson, “Amnesty: The First 25 Years,” 10.

²⁸ Clark, *Diplomacy of Conscience*, p. 5.

²⁹ Benenson, “The Forgotten Prisoners,” 23.

³⁰ Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report on Torture*, 10–11. See also the later reports on torture, Amnesty International, *Report on Torture*, 10–11, 11.

the chief source of information on political imprisonment in the USSR, as the "accuracy of the material has never been questioned by the Soviet authorities themselves."³¹ Amnesty was especially interested in the situation of prisoners in mental hospitals. Their chief source of information was the *Chronicle of Current Events*³² which was founded in Moscow in 1968 as a bimonthly Russian-language *samizdat* journal. It provided valuable information through circulating inmate letters and former patients' testimony.³³ It helped the movement defend human rights in the USSR, assembling information about the persecution of underground activists and circulating it inside the Soviet sphere. Its editors tried to retain their anonymity by not providing its postal address on the back page—a standard practice in most journals. If readers wanted to get in touch with the editors, they were encouraged to pass the information to the person from whom they had received the *Chronicle*.³⁴

The *Chronicle* placed Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on its masthead.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.³⁵

It had become common practice for underground writers to refer to Article 19 from the beginning of the 1960s.³⁶ The main objectives of the *Chronicle*'s investigations were violations of this article, such as the many trials against underground writers.³⁷ The *Chronicle* followed the example of the United Nations which proclaimed 1968 the "International Year for Human Rights"³⁸

Both readers inside the Soviet Bloc and Western journalists considered the *Chronicle* the most reliable *samizdat* source, as it obtained a maximum of accuracy and reliability by "checking against a) Soviet press

³¹ Amnesty International, *Report on Torture*, 187.

³² *Ibid.*, 187.

³³ *Ibid.*, 190.

³⁴ "The Clandestine Chronicle," 16.

³⁵ United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

³⁶ Feldbrugge, *Samizdat and Political Dissent*, 42.

³⁷ Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn*, 619.

³⁸ United Nations, "International Year for Human Rights."

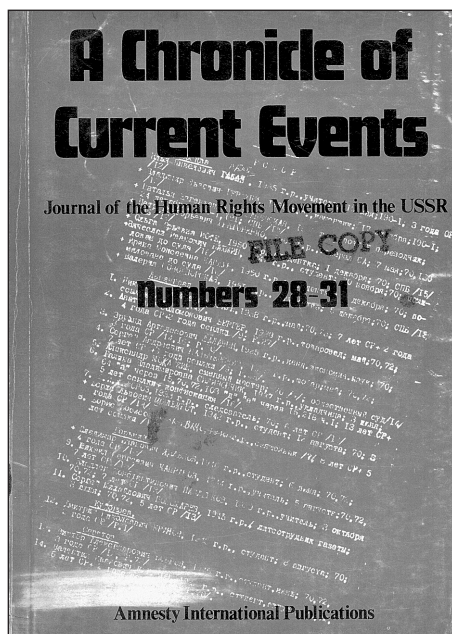


Figure 38: Cover of the English version of *A Chronicle of Current Events: Journal of the Human Rights Movement in the USSR*, No. 28–31. London: Amnesty International Publications, 1975. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

reports, b) Western press reports, c) information from travelers, d) other *samizdat* materials.”³⁹ The authorities’ “hatred of the *Chronicle* manifested in innumerable acts of persecution” that led to week-long interrogations, prison sentences, and exile.⁴⁰ Before being arrested, the famous Russian writer Natalya Gorbanevskaya produced many of the first editions. Six months after the *Chronicle* last appeared in 1973, and had not yet been reestablished, ten of the journal’s editors were investigated and threatened with being allowed to leave for the West only if they told the police all they knew about the publication.⁴¹ Irina Yakir, who was also part of the group, was reported to have “confessed during a series of almost daily interrogations over several weeks” that she had “played a role in the preparation of the last 16 issues of

the publication.”⁴² Ironically, many of the journal’s editors and contributors, who documented the situation in prisons and labor camps, had to spend several months or years in these spaces themselves—or were even expelled from the Soviet Union—for having spread anti-Soviet propaganda through the *Chronicle*.

³⁹ Calvocoressi, “Soviet Civil Rights.”

⁴⁰ Sakharov, “A Reply to Slander.”

⁴¹ “Soviet Dissident Said to Confess,” 14.

⁴² Ibid.

In February 1971, from its sixteenth issue onwards, Amnesty International started publishing English translations, entitled *A Chronicle of Current Events* in London.⁴³ This publication was meant to replace its Russian *samizdat* original in Moscow when it ceased to exist due to the state's violent interference.⁴⁴ The British *Chronicle* served as a Western outlet for news about the Soviet human rights scene, documenting human rights abuses to the Western "general public."⁴⁵ Apart from supporting underground writers and activists in the Soviet Union, it hoped to engage the Western human rights movement. It was intended to be "read not only by those with a professional interest but by anyone who wants to understand the nature of life in a totalitarian society."⁴⁶ The American public intellectual Anthony Lewis firmly believed that the *Chronicle* had a moral task in the West: "[w]e in the West, as we read such things, realize how much liberty and decency we enjoy. We should have another reaction as well. That is to care about every encroachment on privacy and freedom of thought."⁴⁷ The "Preface" by Amnesty in a 1975 issue of the journal *Index on Censorship* states that Amnesty International continued "to regard it [the *Chronicle of Current Events*] as an authentic and reliable source of information on matters of direct concern to our own work for the worldwide observance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."⁴⁸ Printing photographs and documents testifying to the inhumane treatment of non-conformist writers and activists was Amnesty's overall aim.

When the Moscow *Chronicle of Current Events* was silenced in 1973 for two years, a bimonthly Russian version appeared in Manhattan and served as a Western surrogate for the Moscow *Chronicle*.⁴⁹ It ran under Khronika Press, a subsidiary of Chekhov Press established in 1968 by Kline and Hayward.⁵⁰ Some issues were reprinted by the AHF in Amsterdam.

A quarterly English translation of the *Chronicle*, entitled the *Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*, appeared with Khronika from 1973 onwards. The Manhattan *Chronicle* was run by Edward Kline, whose business address

⁴³ Calvocoressi, "Soviet Civil Rights."

⁴⁴ Wrens, "Dissident Periodical Is Revived in Soviet," 5.

⁴⁵ Calvocoressi, "Soviet Civil Rights."

⁴⁶ Lewis, "A Chronicle History," 27.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Preface," *A Chronicle of Current Events*, 1–2.

⁴⁹ Schapiro, "Soviet Heroes."

⁵⁰ Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent*, 79.

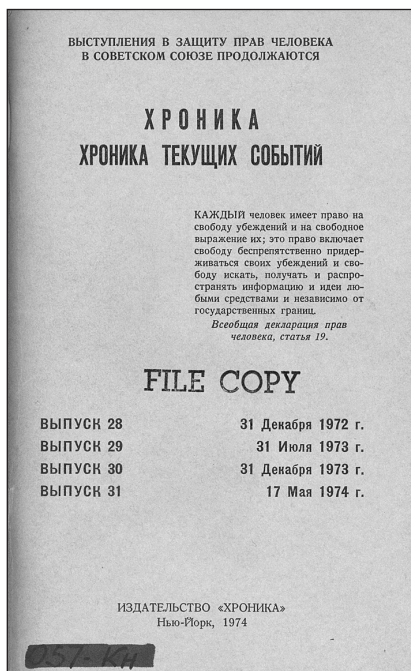


Figure 39: Cover of the Russian version of *Khronika tekushchikh sobytiĭ* [*The Chronicle of Current Events*], November 1972–March 1973. New York: Khronika Press, 1974. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

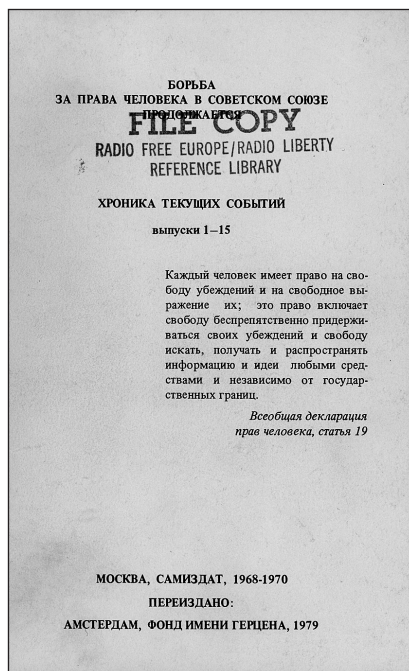


Figure 40: Cover of the reprint of the Russian version of *Khronika tekushchikh sobytiĭ* [*The Chronicle of Current Events*], 1–15. Moscow, 1968–1970. Amsterdam: Alexander Herzen Foundation, 1979. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

“is known to all sorts of Soviet citizens who each month sneak out into the mail hundreds of pages of reports.”⁵¹ The documents and reports came in the *samizdat* form of “tightly packed, secretly typed, hungrily smudged onion skin reports, frail as leaves in the wind and just as autumnal in their hope of renewal.”⁵² Kline was proud to be always the first to know about arrests, releases, or exchanges of writers.⁵³ Through his far-reaching “mysterious con-

⁵¹ Clines, “About New York,” 19.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

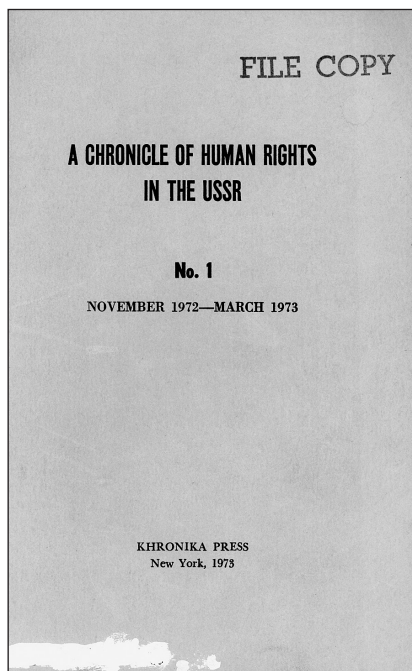


Figure 41: Cover of the first issue of *A Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*. Quarterly. New York: Khronika Press, No. 1, November 1972—March 1973. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

tacts,” including the American government, and by being “on the phone constantly, pursuing rumors and facts,” Kline fought for the cause of Russian dissidents who in return “showed their gratefulness for his ceaseless efforts and financial support.”⁵⁴

But in the eyes of Radio Liberty the Manhattan *Chronicle* posed a threat to the radio’s access to *samizdat* material. On February 26, 1976, Albert Boiter wrote a confidential letter from Munich to Don

Graves in which he formulates his deep frustration with the *Chronicle*’s prior access to original materials:

[y]esterday I received from Khronika Press in N.Y. some announcements (in English!) which give the first inkling of their existence in the West. But the Russian texts are still not available to Radio Liberty [...]. I have discussed the issue repeatedly [...] [with those whom] I thought might be able to do something about Radio Liberty’s need for timely access to the original texts [...]. They have all been sympathetic, provided me with lame excuses [...], and promised that the delivery system will improve. But it does not improve. It gets progressively worse and the role of Radio Liberty as the prime medium of “redistributing” *samizdat* texts to Soviet listeners is the loser.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 121.

⁵⁵ Albert Boiter, “Private Letter by Albert Boiter to Don Graves,” Munich, February 26, 1976, RL, Internal Memos, 1975–1976. *Samizdat General*, 1975–1976. File 1, Box 295. Confidential Letters: Sheet 1–2. Hoover Insti-

Boiter wonders why “documents dispatched from Moscow have to go first to the U.S. then to New York and London before becoming available (if at all) to RL?”⁵⁶ And how could it be that Khronika Press could establish a system of distribution that “in effect amounts to a monopoly over access to original texts?”⁵⁷ But even if Boiter feared Western access to *samizdat* texts could be restricted to certain institutions or individuals, *samizdat*’s and *tamizdat*’s distribution system was largely dependent on the personal interests and relationships of the involved activists. The Russian émigré Chaldize, who was the main target in this conflict with RL, cared deeply about *samizdat* materials, as he was deeply concerned about the fate of prisoners. In an interview for *The New York Times* he remembers that he

discovered that political trials produced more protests and protests brought more political trials. Those who protested were tried and the trials produced more protests. I wanted to suggest to people methods which would have less risk of bringing about reprisals and so it became clear to me that the chief principle of my future work would be the defense of political prisoners—before they had become political prisoners.⁵⁸

But despite his belief in the power and reliability of the law, Chaldize was often left with publishing reports about already imprisoned writers in the context of his work for the *Chronicle*. To pursue this goal, *samizdat* materials represented the sole source of information. The sooner he and other defenders of human rights gained access to the most recent *samizdat* materials about human rights violations, the faster he could be in publicizing the fate of writers. Thus, a conflict with Western competitors like RL over *samizdat* access was insignificant in comparison with the burden prisoners faced.

In a one-hundred-fifty-page report from 1975, entitled “Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR: Their Treatment and Conditions,” Martin Ennals, the Secretary General of Amnesty International outlines the reasons for AI’s activities in the Soviet Union: “[r]egrettably, the Soviet criminal code contains apparently contradictory provisions which

tution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records, Sheet 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Sheet 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Struggling Now for Human Rights,” 243.

permit the authorities to imprison political and religious dissenters." He saw one particularly obvious "manifestation of this anomaly between accepted international law and the Soviet Constitution on the one hand, and domestic criminal law on the other" in the fact that most of those who were in prison "in apparent violation of internationally accepted standards of human rights" were "detailed under criminal code for offences against Soviet law."⁵⁹ For that reason, AI assembled original materials by prisoners themselves, their families, and friends to compose a report on the condition of prisons and prisoners in the Soviet Union.⁶⁰

The report was meant "to draw attention to these contradictions in the hope that Soviet lawyers and penologists will review their legal and penal practices and that the law will be amended to bring it into conformity with the recently ratified international covenants and the Soviet Constitution itself."⁶¹ The report concludes with concrete recommendations for the Soviet government and Soviet lawyers on how to stop violating international standards for prisoners' treatment and how to improve their conditions.⁶² In the review essay entitled "Western Support of Human Rights Activism in the S.U." dating from 1980, Richard Dean concludes that "dissidents have recognized the effectiveness of such efforts, particularly the personal intervention of AI officials. Bukovsky [a writer and activist] attributes his release in 1965 from confinement in a psychiatric hospital to a personal visit to the hospital director by a member of AI who threatened to bring the matter before an international tribunal."⁶³

In a report released in 1986 about Amnesty's work during its first twenty-five years, Benenson reflects on the organization's efficiency concerning the freedom of writers in the Eastern Bloc. He asks himself, "[w]hat can be said about the Communist part of the world? Has Amnesty made any impression?" Although also detailing the organization's successful work in the region, he answers rather negatively: "[t]he answer is less than we should or could." He blames especially "the demonizing of Communism by those who have little concern for

⁵⁹ Amnesty International, *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR*, 6.

⁶⁰ On Amnesty and the Soviet Union see Amnesty International, *Letters to the Soviet Authorities* and *The Amnesty International Handbook*.

⁶¹ Amnesty International, *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR*, 6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 138.

⁶³ Dean, "Contacts with the West," 63.

the aspiration of the people of Eastern Europe” which “inevitably built up the walls of the Kremlin into a citadel of suspicion and inspired the counter attack which have reduced the expression ‘human rights’ into a weapon of the Cold War.”⁶⁴ With this comment Benenson places full responsibility on the so-called Cold Warriors for the widened ideological gulf between the capitalist West and the communist East brought about by their polarizing rhetoric and politics. To counteract this gulf, people like Benenson and Sammell ignored the official Cold War politics and continued to fight for the right of writers until—and even beyond—the end of the Cold War.

Amnesty International received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 as the recognition of its valuable work in securing “the release of people imprisoned for their opinions.”⁶⁵ During a congress of PEN International in 1986 Susan Sontag contended that by the late 1980s “a modified agenda, a new sense of cultural relations” had emerged. She felt that “a livelier interest, and far more information about the situation of writers worldwide” had arisen thanks to AI, the Helsinki Watch Committee, and PEN, in addition to such journals as *Index on Censorship*,⁶⁶ whose primary aim was to publicly announce and resolve the asymmetry between the demand for the observance of writers’ rights and the reality of writers’ lives inside the Soviet Bloc.

FROM AMNESTY TO HELSINKI

While organizations such as Amnesty International disclosed human rights abuses inside the Soviet Bloc, the preparation and actual signing of the Helsinki Accords further intensified claims for the universal observance of fundamental human rights. The increased effectiveness of the social practice of literary transfer was closely connected to the written claims of this international agreement. Even if literary transfers had existed since the late 1950s, it was not until the Helsinki Consultations of the early 1970s (the preparatory talks began in 1971) that a crucial change of perception emerged in the Western sphere about the unofficial literature from the ‘Other Europe.’ The entire process leading up to

⁶⁴ Benenson, “Amnesty: The First 25 Years,” 10.

⁶⁵ Lionaes, “Award Ceremony Speech.”

⁶⁶ Sontag, “When Writers Talk Among Themselves,” BR1.

the agreement was central in formulating new practices, rules, and ideas related to the exchange of literature.

On August 1, 1975, thirty-five nations, including the Soviet Union and the Central European countries, signed the Final Act, the written protocol of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Helsinki. It was the culmination of several years of meetings involving many European nations, the United States, and Canada.⁶⁷ The document was divided into four thematic fields, so-called baskets. In the first basket, the signatories recognized the inviolability of national borders and territorial integrity, including the German-German border. The second basket focused on economic issues such as trade and scientific cooperation. In return for the silent acceptance of Soviet predominance in Eastern and Central Europe, the USSR signed the third basket, an agreement in which it committed itself to recognizing human rights as well as the freedoms of speech, conscience, and worship. Additionally, restrictions on entering and leaving countries were meant to be relaxed and the freedom of press to be guaranteed. The fourth basket formalized the details for follow-up meetings and implementation procedures.

Jiří Pelikán remembers that the Final Act, which was published in official newspapers, “acted like a bombshell because it spelled out certain principles such as freedom of expression, travel, religion, and the circulation of ideas—all at variance with the daily practices of these regimes.”⁶⁸ Some people in the West viewed it as an unfortunate ratification of the post-World War II division of Europe, but the inclusion of human rights issues made it a revolutionary event that transformed much of Central and Eastern Europe. By defining human rights and freedom as being of first-rank importance in the relations between the CSCE member states, it profoundly reshaped the Soviet Union’s international role. The fact that the USSR and the various satellite states signed this agreement and committed themselves to recognizing human rights theoretically legitimized the interference of other member states in their internal affairs in case the Helsinki commitments were not observed.⁶⁹ This international interest in the suffering of people living under Eastern and Central

⁶⁷ Helsinki Final Act, August 1, 1975, accessed September 17, 2012, <http://www.hri.org/docs/Helsinki75.html#H2.10>.

⁶⁸ Jiří Pelikán, “Some Considerations for Discussion,” September 7, 1982, Sheet 95–111. HU OSA 318-0-5, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Project Files, Cultural Forum Budapest General, 1985.

⁶⁹ Mastny, *Helsinki, Human Rights, and European Security*.

European communism, along with a new possibility to denounce human rights violations, created a renewed wave of hope among the people behind the Iron Curtain. Besides the Helsinki Accords' recognition of the European status quo, including the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, a major aspect of the Accords was dedicated to improving the free movement of ideas and information in Europe,⁷⁰ which was thought to be a "fundamental norm of relations among all European states, including the Communist bloc."⁷¹

As laid out in the third basket, these changes were intended to facilitate better access to and an increased exchange of information.⁷² The signatories agreed, on the one hand, to treat their media in a more lenient manner, and, on the other hand, to allow for a freer exchange of media between the countries involved. They encouraged the use of so-called normal channels—that is official channels—for the distribution of publications and newspapers. As such, they promised to decrease their censorship and diminish press limitations, at least theoretically. In practice, however, non-official writers and scholars could not overcome these limitations when they intended to publish their works in the official press.

In order to guarantee the uncensored availability of printed material, one major agreement of the Accords concerned the unrestricted public access to periodical and non-periodical printed publications. This directive was joined by a demand for more places to sell, read, or borrow such publications, including large public and university libraries.⁷³ The signatories agreed to recognize "the importance of the dissemination of information from the other participating states," and aimed to "facilitate the freer and wider dissemination of information of all kinds, to encourage cooperation in the field of information and the exchange of information with other countries."⁷⁴ Pressure from Western signatories concerned with the isolation of writers in the East and with the narrow window of literary exchanges led to the inclusion of a paragraph entitled

⁷⁰ Richmond, "To Helsinki and Beyond," 186.

⁷¹ Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*, 49.

⁷² The third basket is entitled "Questions Relating to Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean: Co-operation in Humanitarian and Other Fields," Helsinki Final Act, <http://www.hri.org/docs/Helsinki75.html#H2.10>.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

"Cooperation and Exchanges in the Field of Culture,"⁷⁵ which outlined possibilities of future cooperation between publishers, writers, periodicals, and newspapers in East and West.

Soviet Bloc countries were to facilitate these literary exchanges and communication between authors and publishing houses,⁷⁶ and to gradually increase the number and diversity of foreign works, both in the original language and translation, in libraries and bookshops. Literary exchanges across the Iron Curtain would help overcome the literary isolation of the Eastern European countries that had created an impossible atmosphere for non-official writers by making texts available in libraries and bookshops abroad. By increasing the number of translated works, especially from less widely spoken languages, and by making them available in libraries and bookshops, Eastern European countries could re-enter Western literary debates.⁷⁷ The American political thinker Louis Hartz anticipated these developments in 1964, when he advanced the notion that the foundation of a Western conception of human rights originated in the understanding of a common cultural, especially literary, heritage. Human rights, in Hartz's definition, stem from the "'fragments' of a once shared European philosophical, political, cultural, and religious heritage."⁷⁸

Despite the mutual engagement to further détente and a peaceful coexistence between the Soviet sphere and Western countries in the early 1970s, it became increasingly clear that the Socialist regimes would not meet the expectations of the Helsinki Accords. In an article in *The New York Times* from November 22, 1975, Kathleen Teltsch, a UN correspondent at the time, draws attention to the limited ability to force governments to fulfill what they had signed in Helsinki:

Each year the United Nations received 14,000 letters on human-rights violations, many of them involving political prisoners, but it has had minimal success in dealing with them because most governments are reluctant to expose their practices to outside scrutiny.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ "3. Cooperation and Exchanges in the Field of Culture, Access," Helsinki Final Act.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Cited in Tőkés, "Human Rights and Political Change," 4.

⁷⁹ Teltsch, "World Network Helps Political Prisoners," 6.

As the Helsinki Accords did not have a binding legal status, the various Central, East, and Southeast European governments did not feel obliged to implement the suggested reforms. From the point of view of the isolated and uninformed public in the 'Other Europe,' the promises of the Helsinki Accords were at radical variance with the reality of the information system. As the monopoly of information was one of the main pillars of the regime, citizens legitimately doubted whether 'Other Europe' authorities had any intention of respecting their commitments.

Despite its inherent structural weakness as just a "declaration of intentions,"⁸⁰ as Sarah B. Snyder has put it, Helsinki nevertheless affected East-West relations to a great extent. Although not going as far as Snyder, who directly linked the "Helsinki Effect" with the revolutions of 1989 and "the end of the Cold War,"⁸¹ I contend that Helsinki served as an important reference point for those who had campaigned since the 1950s for writers' basic rights on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Though skeptical about the efficiency of official human rights appeals to the UN and to other legal organizations, Teltsch acknowledges that people like Edward Kline, and many others, formed a network of individuals assisting political prisoners through human-rights organizations worldwide—a number that ran up to hundreds of thousands.⁸² By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the engagement with writers' rights had become a reciprocal activity that involved activists on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The semantic linkage between "freedom of expression," "freedom of thought," and the "free flow of ideas" on the one hand, and the push for the release of imprisoned writers on the other points to the nature of the emerging transnational community. Konrád reflected on the joint mission of such a community:

Working in community, united with those who work for freedom at home and abroad, with the critics of censorship, the defenders of human rights, we are the carriers of that hidden, subconscious, underground-but-always-resurfacing, nowhere-entirely-defeated, never-tiring democratic process.⁸³

In Jan Kavan's words, it was the "commitment to civil and human rights [which] was the common denominator amongst all of the student leaders

⁸⁰ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*, 5.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Teltsch, "World Network Helps Political Prisoners," 6.

⁸³ Konrád, "A Dissidents Note."

of the sixties, irrespective of their ideological differences.”⁸⁴ It was a shared belief that a transnational literary community could only thrive if the freedom of the individual writer was protected.

This ‘world network’ of people took the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Helsinki Accords as guidelines for their own agendas.⁸⁵ Though not successful in forcing the signatories to comply with the Accords, the two documents pushed for the right to publish in the Western press and to access foreign literature, areas that were still very restricted. The discrepancies between the Soviet reality and its promises in the Helsinki Accords produced various calls for the realization of the far-reaching promises of cultural cross-border cooperation and for the acknowledgement of certain artistic and literary freedoms in the Soviet sphere of influence. Despite Helsinki’s failure in terms of its immediate official realization, the Accords offered new paths towards a more liberal flow of information. Jeri Laber, one of the founders of Helsinki Watch, summarized this paradoxical situation as follows: “[t]here is historical irony in the Helsinki Agreement that no one could have predicted at the time: seen as a means of consolidating Soviet control, it would eventually become a vehicle for ending it.”⁸⁶ Czechoslovakia’s signature of the Final Act nevertheless prevented conspicuous forms of persecution, because oppressed writers dared to refer to the Helsinki Act to express their dissatisfaction and claim their rights.⁸⁷ Thus, the underground writer, the publisher, the human rights activist, and the poet saw the Helsinki Accords as a how-to manual for increasing the flow of written material between East and West.

The increased availability of knowledge about the inhumane treatment of non-conformist writers, and the opportunity to remind Soviet officials of their signature on the Helsinki Accords, created an atmosphere in which intellectuals on both sides of the Iron Curtain furthered the cause of greater political freedom and the idea of a ‘literary Helsinki.’ Human rights groups arose all over Europe and the United States, focusing in particular on the right to express opinions and to publish and circulate ideas. *Samizdat* and *tamizdat* were core elements of this cross-border endeavor. Ten years after the Helsinki Accords, the

⁸⁴ Cited in Randle, *People Power*, 151.

⁸⁵ Teltsch, “World Network Helps Political Prisoners,” 6.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Tigrid and Filip, “Dissidenten wider Willen,” 12–13. Translation by the author. Kołakowski makes a similar argument in “Is Détente Working?”

Hungarian intellectual Miklós Haraszti commented on the inherently intertwined connection between human rights and *samizdat*: “[w]hom does it astonish if human rights movements turn under these conditions to a kind of cult community of the Gutenberg-Religion? The first commandment of the religion reads: do it yourself.”⁸⁸ This implementation of the Helsinki Accords reached another level when it developed into a mutual concern of intellectuals, human rights activists, and writers on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In 1977, the Russian writer Georgii Vladimov identified a shift taking place in the non-conformist publishing sphere, something he expressed in a letter to the *New York Review of Books*:

[t]en years ago, in a letter to the IVth Congress [of the Writers’ Union], I spoke of the beginning of the *Samizdat* era—and now it is already coming to an end, and another, much lengthier one, is coming—the era of *Tamizdat*. In reality, hated by you [the Writers’ Union], *Tamizdat* always existed, like a flight deck in the ocean on which the tired pilot could bring down his plane when domestic airports refused to let him land.⁸⁹

Increased cooperation across the Iron Curtain facilitated *tamizdat*’s burgeoning production and circulation. For such cooperation to come into being, cross-Iron Curtain intellectuals had to come to a joint understanding of the necessity of personal and literary exchanges. The human rights discourse served as the unified path towards an increased flow of literature and intensified contacts across the Curtain. Acutely aware of the previous silence surrounding human rights, Haraszti addressed Western readers in 1985:

[y]ou are not alone, precious readers, if you perceive today’s fight for human rights as an anachronism. Why should this only develop feelings of solidarity [...]? We, human rights activists, are to ourselves just as much a source of embarrassment. We know that we are utterly late and badly informed, and that we invented above all only an elixir of which today nobody believes

⁸⁸ Haraszti, “Zum Verrücktwerden,” 31. Translation by the author.

⁸⁹ The letter was written on October 10, 1977. See Jernakoff and Vladimov, “Dropping Out.”

as having healing capacities. We know that we cannot count on the democratic solidarity à la nineteenth century (to which you should not resign yourself).⁹⁰

Although expressing a deep-rooted disbelief in the real success of the human rights movement, Haraszti appeals for the creation of an imagined community. In his speech he addresses a solidarity movement that will overcome the limits of the national human rights groups. Despite his ironic tone, Haraszti invited Western readers not to give up their belief in the idea of a democratic movement, united in solidarity and in the engagement with human rights, its activists bound together in an internationally respected struggle for the rights of the writer.

HUMAN RIGHTS BEYOND HELSINKI

Shortly after the publication of the Helsinki Final Act in *Pravda*, groups formed in the 'Other Europe' that reported on their governments' failure to respect the freedom to publish and to facilitate a more liberal exchange of information between East and West. As analyzed in Chapter 1, the increased sensitivity of intellectuals across these spheres to the treatment of oppositional writers was fostered in particular by the many personal accounts of underground writers. Sinyavsky's and Daniel's 1966 trial and its detailed documentation in *The White Book* elicited such powerful declarations of solidarity that one could argue it sparked the human rights movement in the Soviet Union. Pavel Litvinov describes this kind of material as "a special kind of literature" that was meant to defend "Russian literature" and "Russian writers."⁹¹ All kinds of "[p]eople started to write letters and articles in defense of arrested writers, to collect them in volumes, to send those volumes abroad, and to circulate them in *samizdat*."⁹² This was a literature in defense not only of writers, but also of many other people inside the Soviet sphere. In order to express these concerns, a flow of letters, telegrams, and reports to international human rights organizations emerged from across the Iron Curtain. This resulted in strong official reactions inside the Soviet Bloc, however. In

⁹⁰ Haraszti, "Zum Verrücktwerden," 25.

⁹¹ Litvinov, "Writing in an Open and a Closed Society."

⁹² Ibid.

an article in *Pravda*, Daniel Kraminov, a leading Soviet journalist, stated that the “bourgeois press gleefully acclaimed the shouters, defended them furiously and copiously shed crocodile tears when the Soviet authorities brought them to justice.” He regreted that Western propaganda had mobilized “noted writers abroad” to denounce the trial.⁹³ Statements such as these infuriated critical intellectuals. Their appeals condemned not just the trials, but also their legal procedures and the social discourses surrounding them. Its signatories demanded “full publicity about the testimony and the evidence,” criticizing the fact that the trial could only be attended by a handful of selected people with entry passes and took place “behind guarded doors.”⁹⁴ Their public denunciation of the trial as legal mockery paved the way for a new kind of publicity on behalf of the concerns of dissident writers and intellectuals.

In 1976, the first group that pushed for the implementation of the Helsinki Act and published accounts by writers that were imprisoned or under house arrest, became known as the Moscow Helsinki Watch Committee. In the following years, other groups arose that followed the example of the Moscow group, such as the Workers Defense Committee, KOR in Poland, and Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. As one of the latter organization’s founding members, Václav Havel once remarked that the “reflection on the bitter daily experiences of the citizen in a totalitarian state always leads quite logically to the same point—a new appreciation of the importance of human rights, human dignity, and civic freedom.”⁹⁵ Since the human rights movement inside the Soviet sphere most visibly comprised intellectuals, it comes as no surprise that from its inception the freedom of expression was one of the movement’s main demands. It was there on the pages of *Charter 77* (1977), in which the existing limitations to the freedom of expression and severe restrictions to publishing were outlined:

[f]reedom of public expression is inhibited by the centralized control of all the communication media and of publishing. [...] No philosophical, political, or scientific view or artistic activity that departs ever so slightly from the narrow bounds of official ideology or aesthetics is allowed to be published.⁹⁶

⁹³ Anderson, “Soviet Trial of Four Likened to Purges,” 9.

⁹⁴ Anderson, “Soviet Petitioners Ask New Trial,” 2.

⁹⁵ Havel, “An Anatomy of Reticence,” 18.

⁹⁶ “Charter 77.”



Figure 42: Photograph of a meeting of the Charter 77 group, Prague 1977. Archive of the Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

By contrasting the demands of the Helsinki Final Act to the ongoing violations of the basic rights of writers within Czechoslovakia, Charter 77 revealed the government's unwillingness to keep its agreement: "Many scholars, writers, artists, and others are penalized for having legally published or expressed, years ago, opinions which are condemned by those, who hold political power today."⁹⁷ As Charter 77 was predominantly a group of writers and thinkers, "its principal activity was its endless publication of documents—declarations, open letters, and communiqués."⁹⁸ Like many similar civic initiatives, it sought to call the attention of the general public to the daily persecution of writers and intellectuals.

While the Charter 77 movement and its written appeals were indeed central in furthering the human rights movement in Czechoslovakia, its ability to change the political agenda of the authorities was minimal. Paulina Bren suggests shifting the focus towards the obvious disparity between the heroic vision of the signatories and the dispassionate reac-

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, 91.

tion of the authorities. The official Charter 77 document from January 1, 1977, closes by stressing its belief “that Charter 77 will help to enable all citizens of Czechoslovakia to work and live as free human beings.”⁹⁹ But while the Charter 77 document explicitly expressed the Chartists’ wish to open a dialogue with the state, which did not want to engage in any form of official dialogue, little serious rapprochement could be expected. Ending with a close look at the interest and involvement of the “green-grocer,” a symbol of the ordinary people, Bren concludes that Charter 77 did not succeed in actually mobilizing the masses to fight for the cause of human rights.¹⁰⁰

Ordinary people’s reaction to this appeal was rather reserved, then. As the Prague Spring and the political program of “socialism with a human face” had quite miserably failed in 1968, ordinary people seriously doubted whether they could again trust a predominantly intellectual movement or dissidents “as the nation’s ethical guardians.”¹⁰¹ Instead, people’s wish for a “quiet life” in normalized Czechoslovakia caused them to retreat from public activity;¹⁰² they felt that “being public and political was out of fashion.”¹⁰³ Thus, neither a real public sphere nor a civil society emerged from Charter 77’s initiatives that could have convincingly pressured the government to comply with international standards of human rights. And as “long as the Charter could not demonstrate significant support from the public,” the political elite “did not have to contemplate seriously any such exchange.”¹⁰⁴

Apart from its circulation in *samizdat*, the Charter 77 declaration first appeared in various foreign newspapers in English and German translations in *The Times*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Le Monde*. Thus, it attracted both the attention of already diligent Western writers and publishers and sought international publicity. Later, on January 27, 1977, the appeal appeared under the title “Manifesto Charging Rights Violations in Czechoslovakia” in *The New York Times* and was followed by a series of articles that reported on the Czechoslovak

⁹⁹ Declaration of Charter 77, January 1, 1977, accessed October, 25, 2013, http://libpro.cts.cuni.cz/charta/docs/declaration_of_charter_77.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*, 97.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 111.

¹⁰² Ibid., 87.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 207.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 97.

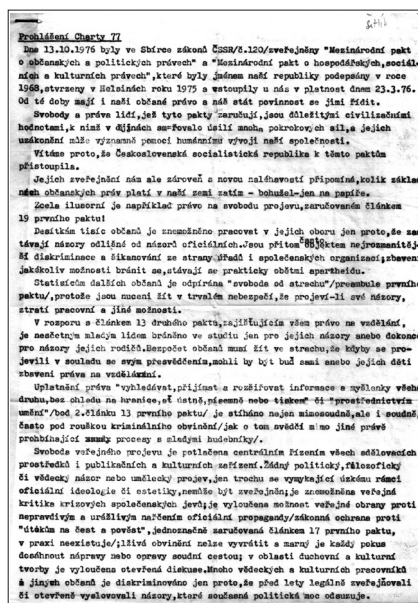


Figure 43: Photograph of the Czech version of the Charter 77 document, 1977. Archive of Libri Prohibiti, Prague.

authorities' harsh reaction.¹⁰⁵ Though having rather limited success in officially bargaining with the authorities, Charter 77 served as another binding element in the transnational human rights movement and its efforts in lobbying for the respect of human rights throughout the world.

Through its continuous efforts to publicize human right abuses inside the Eastern Bloc, this transnational human rights network contributed to a public concern for persecuted writers and intellectuals. The engagement of various circles of Western human rights activists and intellectuals created publishing initiatives that helped circulate uncensored texts between East and West, and also helped to create a Western readership. It was particularly in New York that publishers and human rights activists came together. When people such as the Luers, whose activism inside the 'Other Europe' I outlined in Chapter 3, returned to New York, they employed the personal contacts they had established in Prague to advance the development of a Western community of human

¹⁰⁵ "Manifesto Charging Rights Violations in Czechoslovakia," 16.

rights activists, continuing the work they had begun in the Soviet sphere in a slightly different manner. People who had once come to the Prague embassy to get in touch with Czech underground activists used their time in New York to establish initiatives to support underground activities from abroad.

Human rights activists such as Bob Bernstein and Jeri Laber approached Wendy Luers in the hope of employing her for their human rights activities. Wendy Luers recalls that when Robert Bernstein heard they were returning to New York from Prague, he immediately called her and asked her if she was interested in working for Human Rights Watch (HRW), the successor organization of Helsinki Watch after 1988. Working for HRW from 1987–1989, Wendy Luers became familiar with many of the New York activists that were engaged in the cause of non-conformist writers.¹⁰⁶ While for many years she had coordinated the East-West contacts from Prague, she perfectly integrated herself into the community of activists in New York, which had taken over a leading role in promoting the rights of writers and activists inside the Soviet sphere. Wendy Luers recalls a welcome party for Zdeněk Urbánek, a Czech writer and translator of English literature, that took place in New York “when the wall came down” and the “revolution was going on.” Urbánek stayed with them during November–December 1989, and they invited all the publishers promoting the literature from ‘over there,’ such as Ashbel Green, Robert Bernstein, and Barbara Epstein, to the party.¹⁰⁷ *The New York Times* called the event the “Prague Revolution on Fifth Avenue” where “everybody knows everybody,”¹⁰⁸ reflecting the close connection between New York and the ‘Other Europe.’

As discussed in Chapter 2, from the late 1960s onwards several main figures of the New York intellectual scene directed their attention to this region. Consequently, human and writers’ rights figured more prominently in official Western discourse. Deeply concerned with the fate of persecuted and imprisoned writers inside the Eastern Bloc, a major Western initiative was founded in July 1973 when a group of eleven American writers, historians, and publishers established the committee

¹⁰⁶ Wendy Luers, interview by the author.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “From Prague to Fifth Ave., a Transplanted Salon for Czechoslovaks,” *The New York Times*, December 11, 1989. The article points to the close intellectual and personal connections between the group of New York intellectuals and former underground writers.

which became known as the American Helsinki Watch, subsequently renamed Human Rights Watch in 1988. The original committee worked towards the release of imprisoned Helsinki observers and activists inside the Soviet sphere who had been part of such committees as the Moscow Helsinki Group. The vast amount of the arrests of the members of the Helsinki Watch groups in the 'Other Europe' in the years following the Helsinki Accords shook the Western public and prompted activists to increase their public support.

Among the committee members were popular American writers, such as Arthur Miller and John Updike, and the presidents of the largest American publishing houses, William Jovanovich,¹⁰⁹ Robert L. Bernstein,¹¹⁰ and Winthrop Knowlton.¹¹¹ Due to their activities, newspapers and journals in the West began to publish original documents on political and cultural non-conformity from across the Iron Curtain. There were close links between human rights groups and publishing initiatives, which played an active role in supporting persecuted writers in the East. The American Helsinki Watch's first initiative was to come to the defense of Andrei Amalrik, who had been convicted by the Soviet authorities for secretly circulating his works. In 1973, the group expressed its solidarity with Amalrik in a common appeal in the *New York Review of Books*:

[w]e are writers and publishers, who are deeply concerned that the Moscow writer, Andrei Amalrik, has not been freed from prison camp at the conclusion of a harsh term. We now establish a Committee in Defense of Andrei Amalrik for the purpose of appealing to the government of the USSR for clemency. Andrei Amalrik has been punished for openly expressing his thoughts [...] we urge that the responsible authorities act to effect [...] the restoration of his rights under the law, including the right to expression. [...] We ask that clemency be shown toward him in the spirit of improving relations between the USSR and the USA.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ The publisher of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

¹¹⁰ The publisher of Random House.

¹¹¹ The publisher of Harper and Row.

¹¹² "Committee in Defense of Andrei Amalrik."

This common appeal instigated the creation of a committee to support silenced writers in the East. Watch committees were installed in various Central and East European countries to monitor compliance with the Helsinki Accords. In 1974, the same people published a similar sounding appeal in solidarity with Vladimir Bukovsky. Andrei Sakharov, too, attracted much attention in the West, especially from New York publishers who were closely linked to human rights activism. In his Nobel Lecture in 1975 Sakharov summarized many of the values for which Western writers and publishers had been willing to engage themselves. "I am convinced," he wrote, "that international confidence, mutual understanding, disarmament, and international security are inconceivable without an open society with freedom of information, freedom of conscience, the right to publish."¹¹³

Apart from the various Helsinki Watch committees, human rights activists and publishers in the West began to take the Helsinki Accords literally. Slowly but surely, human rights initiatives sprang up that publicized abuses of the freedom of expression and supported non-conformist writers. New York in particular proved active: it saw the establishment of the International Freedom to Publish Committee (IFPC) in 1975 by the Association of American Publishers (AAP) and the Fund for Free Expression, also in 1975. Common appeals were published in journals such as the *NYRB*, representing the opinion of highly reputable public New York intellectuals and their milieus, and transmitting profound feelings of solidarity with their banned colleagues in the East. Arthur Miller, the president of PEN International, emphasized in his autobiography how a new sense of transnational solidarity began to spread among American intellectuals in the mid-1960s, which was reflected by PEN's orientation towards the East: "PEN seemed to promise an awakening of humanist solidarity at a time when the opposing creed of untrammelled individualism and private success was beginning its most recent sweep of the American political landscape."¹¹⁴ Years later, in 1979, representatives of American PEN and the Helsinki Watch committee appealed for the support of the members of the Charter 77 movement:

[w]e—the members of PEN American Center and the U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee—call for the release of these eleven

¹¹³ Sakharov, "Peace, Progress, Human Rights. Nobel Lecture."

¹¹⁴ Miller, *Timebends*, 573–74.

men and women. We call on the government of Czechoslovakia to honor its international commitments by allowing its citizens to play an active role in the protection of their civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.¹¹⁵

The founding statement of the IFPC addresses many of the principles of free expression that had been laid out in Article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights:

[w]riting and publishing are the greatest peaceful means of educating the human race. Accordingly, the freedom of writers and publishers everywhere to express themselves as they wish [...] without fear or intimidation is a paramount concern of American publishers. The Committee is pledged to protect and promote the rights of publishers and authors around the world by every available means.¹¹⁶

Laber expressed her motivation at that time as follows: “[o]ur interest was mainly in what was happening over there, where citizens, who spoke out were thrown into prison.”¹¹⁷ She felt the urgent need to give those isolated writers and human rights activists inside the Soviet Union a voice and to become “their eyes and ears to the rest of the world.” Personal meetings with dissident writers enabled her to speak out and mobilize people in support of their cause, receiving widespread commitments to help the writers from a broad swathe of people.¹¹⁸ Before her travels she would closely read *samizdat* sources or talk to émigrés to pick up names of writers and prisoners. Once there, she called them, but tried to attract as little attention as possible, as most of those people were under surveillance from the secret police.¹¹⁹ During her travels in the Soviet Union she succeeded in getting in touch with a range of familiar and less-familiar writers. Laber’s activities demonstrate the close relationship between publishing and human rights activism.

¹¹⁵ “Free the Czechs.”

¹¹⁶ “The International Freedom to Publish Committee,” Association of American Publishers, accessed September 5, 2012.

¹¹⁷ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 100.

¹¹⁸ Edman, “From the Iron Curtain to the Persian Gulf,” 17.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

In a 2005 interview Bernstein elaborated on the connection between human rights and publishing: “[f]rom my personal point of view, the human rights part of trying to free the writers and the publishing part just worked together.”¹²⁰ Specialized in publishing underground writings, Bernstein described his initial motivation to publish uncensored writers as follows: “[o]ur job was mostly to publicize and to publish uncensored writers and to keep their names, especially when they were put in prison, in press, so that they were not forgotten.”¹²¹ Sometimes, to support a writer in prison became the overall aim of publishing a certain book. “When somebody brought me a manuscript from Havel,” Bernstein recalled, “saying that it was not as good as his previous work, asking ‘Should we publish it?’ my answer was [...] ‘He is in jail, of course we should publish it.’”¹²²

Besides publishers, émigrés were also, as I outlined in Chapter 2, very important in this process, because they could provide important information about human rights violations inside the Soviet sphere. Émigrés’ existence embodied not just the failure of state socialism but also the American conviction in the necessary borderlessness of the world of culture. If one imagined the world as a “living organism,” violations of human rights and people’s freedom could never invite indifference, because an “infection at any point in the world” could affect the “whole organism,” including American life.¹²³ Often in close cooperation with émigrés, American publishers initiated projects that publicized human rights issues behind the Iron Curtain. One of these schemes was the third Moscow Book Fair Reception in Exile held at the New York Public Library on September 14, 1981. This alternative book fair offered a forum for exiled authors and Western publishers who were neither welcome nor interested in attending the third official Moscow Book Fair, which had taken place a week earlier.

Bernstein remembers his discontent with the original objective of the Moscow Book Fair from its inception in 1977, stating that when “Moscow announced the book fair, I protested that it was not an open

¹²⁰ Bernstein, interview by the author, New York, May 4, 2005.

¹²¹ Ibid. On the importance of preventing underground literature from disappearing into oblivion see Schapiro, “Soviet Heroes.”

¹²² Bernstein, interview by the author.

¹²³ “To the Editor of the Evening Star,” March 5, 1972. Stefan Karbonski Papers, Box 4, Sheet 1. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Corporate Records.

book fair, that they would censor the books, that I would not go.”¹²⁴ Bernstein subsequently decided to circumvent the censorship and create an exhibition for the second book fair in 1979. Entitled *America through American Eyes: An Exhibit of Recent Books that Reflect Life in the United States* it offered Russian readers a broad view of recent American literature and the arts. Realizing “that those people who go to book fairs can’t read the books,” he decided to put in “a lot of picture books” and a catalogue “with all those things you could buy, which one could not buy in those communist countries.” The exhibition was “a smash,” so much so that when he was on his way to the airport they confiscated his visa.¹²⁵ Winthrop Knowlton of Harper and Row and Ardis’s Carl Proffer also had their visas revoked.¹²⁶ Bernstein is convinced that visas were only denied to those “American publishers whose authors included dissident Soviet writers or who had views on publishing that annoyed the Soviet Government.”¹²⁷ At the fair itself, inspectors ransacked exhibitions and carted off more than fifty books.

Yet, the Soviet action against the American publishers provoked a harsh counterattack from the American side. At the Frankfurt Book Fair, which took place just a month later in October 1979, American publishers voiced their dissatisfaction with the Soviet treatment of their books in Moscow. At American booths a sign stating “This Book Banned at the ‘79 Moscow Book Fair” was placed over books that had been “confiscated” or “where others mysteriously disappeared and where visas were denied” to American publishers who had published books by “Soviet writers in disfavor in Moscow.”¹²⁸ Due to such clashes and to low sales, the American representation at the following third Moscow Book Fair two years later in 1981 was sharply reduced. Bernstein concluded that “as far as American book publishers are concerned, the Moscow Book Fair is dead.” As a human rights activist Bernstein felt it a “monstrous irony” that just a few years earlier Brezhnev had signed the Helsinki Final Act guaranteeing “the fundamental right of free expression.”¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Bernstein, interview by the author.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Schonberg, “A Book Fair is Planned for Exiles from Soviet.”

¹²⁷ Bernstein, “Moscow’s Un-Fair,” A23.

¹²⁸ Mitgang, “Frankfurt Book Fair,” C28.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Despite the Soviet censorship of controversial American books at the Moscow Book Fair, some American publishers decided to sell some of their less problematic books. Even if sales were not always lucrative, visitors “stood at the Western stands for hours reading books that were almost impossible to obtain.”¹³⁰ At the end of the event some American publishers even allowed Russian readers to ‘steal’ the remaining books. In this way, the Russian readership was able to access at least some works from the American literary market. In this context, book fairs inside the Eastern Bloc turned into spaces of illegal book transfers. At the Leipzig Book Fair, for instance, otherwise inaccessible Western books attracted crowds of people that gathered for days at the stands. In the end, almost all exhibited copies of the forbidden Western-type literature had been stolen. But the publishers “close[d] both of their eyes,” as this type of literary exchange “provided a service to the otherwise unreachable reader.”¹³¹ The first book fair in Sofia in 1968, too, witnessed “[p]hysicians, scientists and engineers [that] mobbed the stands and eagerly picked out books in their specialties, like children opening their present around the Christmas tree.”¹³²

But for those Western publishers that could not or would not go to Moscow, Leipzig, or Sofia, the Moscow Book Fair Reception in Exile in the New York Public Library allowed them to demonstrate their contributions to facilitating the flow of information and the availability of uncensored Soviet novels in English translations. Furthermore, it proposed to honor the literary work of Soviet writers who had emigrated or had been exiled from the Soviet Union. Bernstein, together with the Association of American Publishers, invited “all the exile writers and we had that [book fair] in exile at the same time when they were having a fair [in Moscow]. So we made a point, in a small way. I mean these are not major tries. We were trying to register discontent in the best you can when you are not a government.”¹³³ This book fair, like the 1977 *Bienale del Dissenso*, served as a meeting place for writers and publishers and exhibited American publishing initiatives. The one-day fair was not limited to the circle of interested publishers and émigrés but became part of the third annual New York Is Book Country Street Fair, a literary street fair in Manhattan. In this way it garnered greater publicity. As *The*

¹³⁰ Richmond, “Hot Books in the Cold War,” 138–39.

¹³¹ Conrad, “Leipziger Buchmesse im Zeichen Lenins.”

¹³² Raymont, “Book Fair Draws Throngs in Sofia,” 53.

¹³³ Bernstein, interview by author.

New York Times reported, “[t]he festival is not without its serious dimension. The Fund for Free Expression, which earlier this week co-sponsored a Moscow Book Fair Reception in Exile at the New York Public Library, will feature books by Soviet writers published in the United States but unavailable in the Soviet Union.”¹³⁴ Through such means publishers and émigrés hoped to attract the average reader’s attention to unknown writers from the East.

Other Western book fairs, such as the one in Frankfurt, were equally used as spaces to exhibit the latest literature—both official and non-conformist—from the ‘Other Europe.’ They turned into places where uncensored literature that had been smuggled out from the Soviet Bloc and had been published in the West could be exhibited to a Western audience, prompting translations into other Western languages. (See Figure 32 on p. 326.) At a news conference that was held “in conjunction with the annual Frankfurt Book Fair” it was disclosed that the banished Soviet Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov had managed to smuggle his autobiography to the West, where it would be published by Bernstein at the American publishing house Alfred A. Knopf.¹³⁵ Frankfurt thus served as a forum for the publication of underground and dissident books in the 1980s, particularly Solidarity’s political struggle in Poland.¹³⁶ (See Figures 33–35 on pp. 326–328.) The book fair served as a “show-and-tell and buy-and-sell fair” that gave a preview of what Western readers would be reading by foreign authors in the next few years.¹³⁷ *Tamizdat* publishers such as the AHF also arranged for special exhibitions sometimes that documented their work and their most recent publications of authors from the ‘Other Europe.’

At the more classical book fairs, in particular, nominations for literary awards motivated publishers to exhibit authors’ work. When it became known during the 1980 Frankfurt Book Fair, for instance, that Czesław Miłosz was about to receive the Nobel Prize for literature, reporters crowded around the booth of the official Polish publishers. But as Miłosz’s work had not been published officially in Poland, the reporters soon realized that they had gathered at the wrong place. They

¹³⁴ McDowell, “Fifth Avenue Turns Book Fair Country on Sunday.” See also “Free at Last” and Schonberg, “A Book Fair is Planned for Exiles.”

¹³⁵ Apart from Sakharov’s memoirs his wife’s were also published. See Bonner, *Alone Together*, and Markham, “Autobiography of Sakharov Smuggled Out.”

¹³⁶ Tagliabue, “Dissidents’ Books at Frankfurt Fair,” C21.

¹³⁷ Mitgang, “Book World Meets in Frankfurt,” 48.



Figure 44: Photograph of the exhibition of the Alexander Herzen Foundation in Paris in the 1970s. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam.

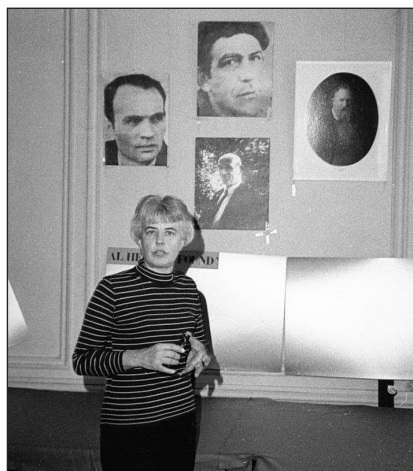


Figure 45: Photograph of Jozina van het Reve Israel, wife of Karel van het Reve, at an exhibition of the Alexander Herzen Foundation in Paris in the 1970s. Archive of Jozien van het Reve, Amsterdam.

quickly moved to the booth of a small exile publisher with the name Overseas Publications Interchange, who had remained in the background of the fair but had actualized the book's publication. Its main representative then exhibited an image of Miłosz, attracting immense publicity immediately.¹³⁸ The book fair turned into a space in which national and international literary politics over writers and their works were enacted.

The book fairs also provided communist book representatives with a “tantalizing look” at what they would not be allowed to publish in their own countries in the coming years due to censorship restrictions.¹³⁹ The book fairs became literary events that triggered conflicts between authors and their states, in addition to escalating tensions between the literary authorities of different nations. Inside the Socialist Bloc, authors who nevertheless generally conformed to the official literary system of their countries and were members of one of the socialist writers' unions, were often prevented from exhibiting. If their works did not in some way fulfill

¹³⁸ Prial, “Miłosz Stirs Interest at Fair.”

¹³⁹ Mitgang, “Book World Meets in Frankfurt,” 48.

the expectations of the Soviet authorities, they either never received an official invitation or were simply refused a visa.

In a letter to the *NYRB* in 1977, for instance, the popular Russian writer Georgii Vladimov, who still wrote for the official literary journal *Novyy Mir*, composed a letter “[t]o the Executive Board of the Writers’ Union of the USSR” in which he attacked the authorities for refusing his visa and preventing him from attending the Frankfurt Book Fair, where he had been invited by the Norwegian publishing house Gyldendal. He harshly condemned the behavior of his writers’ union which had concealed his invitation and also prevented him from meeting his “publisher, his readers, and his book.”¹⁴⁰ Disillusioned with his country’s literary politics Vladimov went a step further, recalling a letter he wrote in 1967: “[t]en years ago, in a letter to the IVth Congress [of the Writers’ Union], I spoke of the beginning of the *samizdat* era—and now it is already coming to an end.” Knowing that his official standing in the Soviet Union literary scene would be further damaged, Vladimov even dared to address the issue of unauthorized Western publications: “another, much lengthier one is coming—the era of *tamizdat*.” In publicly denouncing the union’s behavior towards its own members, Vladimov mocks the organization’s long-term practice of publicly denouncing and exposing supposedly disobedient writers or literary ‘enemies of the people’:

[r]emaining in this land, I, at the same time, do not wish to be with you. I exclude you from my life, not just in my name alone, but in the name of all those whom you have excluded, whom you have “officially” condemned to destruction and oblivion, and who, I believe, would not object, even though they did not empower me to speak for them.¹⁴¹

Sarcastically wishing the union all the best for the future and to carry “on the burden of mediocrity” by continuing to do what they are “fit for and called upon to perform—crush, persecute, detain,” Vladimov politely asked them to leave him out.¹⁴² Instead of waiting for his own exclusion from the organization, he ironically closes the letter by resigning,

¹⁴⁰ Letter by Vladimov, translated by Jernakoff in Jernakoff and Vladimov, “Dropping Out.” The same letter was again published in Georgii Vladimov, “Count Me Out.”

¹⁴¹ Jernakoff and Vladimov, “Dropping Out.”

¹⁴² Ibid.

“returning card No. 1471.”¹⁴³ In the same year he became the head of Amnesty’s Moscow branch, eventually emigrating to West Germany in 1983. With his letter he refused to obey the conventions of Soviet publishing, stressing the particular relevance of Western publications and their exhibition at Western book fairs.

Several years later, the International Helsinki Federation For Human Rights (IHFHR) was founded during the International Citizens Helsinki Watch Conference at Lake Como (Italy) in September 1982. The Federation consisted of national groups from countries that had signed the Helsinki accords and of individuals promoting human rights in countries that prevented the formation of national Helsinki groups.¹⁴⁴ The IHFHR regularly organized conferences both in Western and Eastern Europe to discuss the Accord’s further implementation. Its first meeting in Italy was followed by a 1984 conference in Vienna and by the well-known Alternative Cultural Forum in Budapest in 1985. The Alternative Cultural Forum was to last three days and coincided with the opening of the official six-week intergovernmental European Cultural Forum. Part of the official Helsinki cycle of conferences and consultations, it took place between October 15–November 25, 1985, and included government delegations from thirty-five signatory countries.

While the official meeting discussed governmental policies in the Warsaw Pact countries, the Alternative Cultural Forum offered a non-conformist space for writers excluded from the official meeting. Jeri Laber, the executive director of Helsinki Watch in New York, and György Konrád, the unofficial host, brought together writers from nine countries. As the Hungarian authorities withdrew their permission to hold the symposium at the Duna Intercontinental Hotel or, for that matter, at any other public space, it was held at a private flat of one of the unofficial participants. This flat, according to Garton Ash, with its individual taste for “faded rugs, the Transylvanian pottery, the old, glass-fronted bookcase” stood in “eloquent contrast to the antiseptic corporate

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Jeri Laber, “Report: International Citizens Helsinki Watch Conference,” December 31, 1982. HU OSA 318-0-5-2, Sheet 1–42, Sheet 3. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), 1968–2007, Project Files, Cultural Forum Budapest General, 1985. Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

interiors of the Novotel where the official Forum [was] being held.”¹⁴⁵ This aesthetic contrast symbolized how markedly different the subjects of the two conferences were.

Unlike its official counterpart, the Alternative Cultural Forum analyzed the situation of literature inside and outside the Soviet Bloc critically. For three days discussions dealt with topics such as “The Writer and His Integrity,” “Writing in Exile,” “Writing under Censorship,” “Ethnic Identity in Literature,” “The Future of European Culture,” “The Right to History,” and “Rights of Minorities.”¹⁴⁶ Speakers at the conference included Susan Sontag and E. L. Doctorow from the United States, Per Wästberg from Sweden, Danilo Kiš (Yugoslavian) from Paris, Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Jiří Gruša (Czech) from Germany, Amos Oz from Israel, Francois Bondy from Switzerland, Alain Finkielkraut from France, and Ash and William Shawcross from Britain. (See on this Figures 36 and 37 on p. 329.)

Thus, through events such as the Biennale or the Alternative Cultural Forum, Western intellectuals re-evaluated their image of underground and émigré culture. This literary symposium made history, Kiš points out, as “private citizens from East and West” who had never previously come into contact met “openly in a Warsaw Pact country to discuss [...] the future of European culture in a politically divided Europe.”¹⁴⁷ The Alternative Cultural Forum was seen as the first meeting of Eastern and Western authors inside the Soviet Bloc. An enthusiastic report of the event vaunted how “[f]or the first time in a Warsaw-Pact country, private citizens from many countries including Austria, Canada, CSSR, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and the United States met freely without constraint to discuss and air their

¹⁴⁵ Garton Ash, cited in Theiner, *Writers Meet in Budapest: The Unofficial Cultural Symposium, October 15–18, 1985*. OSA, HU OSA 318-0-5-2: 1. Sheet 1-5, Sheet 2. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), 1968–2007. Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Gerald Nagler to all participants, “Writers and their Integrity. IHF Cultural Symposium,” September 1, 1985. OSA, HU OSA 318-0-5: 2. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), 1968–2007. Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹⁴⁷ Laber, Introduction to “The State, the Imagination, and the Censored,” BR 3.

views—at the same time.” The report stressed how the forum’s character was different from the official intergovernmental conference that was being held at the same time,¹⁴⁸ providing a meeting place where Eastern and Western citizens could freely agree and “disagree in the true spirit of international cooperation symbolized by the Helsinki Final Act.”¹⁴⁹ The focus on disagreement and criticism reveals much about the claims of this unauthorized meeting which sharply criticized censorship for its incapacitation of both writers and readers. As Wästberg observes, “[w]hen a reader is denied access to a book, his freedom is menaced, his possibility to glimpse the truth diminished.”¹⁵⁰ The power of the state censor and the official literary institutions should be diminished, and instead the author, publisher, and reader should again gain control over the production and circulation of literature.

In his talk at the forum Konrád demanded that “readers be the judges of whether they need these books and periodicals or not; let them decide whether they want to buy them. [...] It is the concern of the writer, the publisher, the bookseller, and the reader.”¹⁵¹ George Theiner, a Czech translator, congratulated the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights for having arranged the symposium: “culture, art, and literature are not merely the province of governments and official institutions but, above all, of the writers and artists themselves, their readers and audiences,” he writes, “[n]o better illustration of the letter and spirit of the Helsinki Accords could have been provided—and the fact that it took place not in London, Paris, or Stockholm but in the capital of Hungary gave the whole undertaking yet another dimension.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Per Wästberg, “On the Writer and His Integrity,” Sheet 16.

¹⁴⁹ Gerald Nagler and Karl von Schwarzenberg, “Report on the Cultural Symposium, Budapest, October 1985,” Sheet 1–87, Sheet 3. HU OSA 318-0-5-2, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Project Files, Cultural Forum Budapest General 1985. Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹⁵⁰ Wästberg, “On the Writer and His Integrity,” 16.

¹⁵¹ György Konrád, “Talk at Cultural Symposium, October, 1985, Budapest,” Sheet 1–24, Sheet 22. HU OSA 318-0-5, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Project Files, Cultural Forum Budapest General, 1985. Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

¹⁵² George Theiner, *Writers Meet in Budapest: The Unofficial Cultural Symposium, 15–18 October 1985*, OSA, HU OSA 318-0-5-1, Sheet 1–5, Sheet 5. International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights. Project Files, Cultural Forum Budapest. Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

The Alternative Forum was, however, followed by surges of persecution against writers who had participated in the meeting. Participants in both the official and the alternative cultural forums were alarmed to notice that cultural repression in Hungary had evidently increased since the close of the events.¹⁵³ They heard from Hungarian colleagues about a “wave of house searches, raids, fines and police harassment” that took place after the event’s closing. These intimidations challenged the liberal image the Hungarian government had projected to its visitors during the official forum.¹⁵⁴ Yet, international writers’ meetings such as the Alternative Cultural Forum offered writers from East and West a space to talk, to give feedback, and to initiate cooperation, as well as to argue, to disagree, and to fight over topics of common interest.

THE RETURN TO LITERATURE

The focus on the right to write and publish after the Helsinki Accords was reflected in the process of creating a common language across the Iron Curtain—the language of freedom and rights. As these rights were widely disrespected inside the Soviet sphere, the diffusion and circulation of uncensored thought through literary exchanges was thought to be a possible means of change. Against this backdrop, at least a dozen cultural journals appeared in such cities as West Berlin, Ann Arbor, London, Paris, and Toronto in the immediate period after the Helsinki Accords, as I noted in Chapter 1. Major Western newspapers—including *The New York Times*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Die Zeit*, *Der Spiegel* and *Le Monde*—had been regularly reporting about the cause of ‘dissidents’ since the 1950s. In the 1970s, however, smaller journals appeared that primarily focused on literature from the ‘Other Europe.’ As Herbert Mitgang emphasized in 1977, “[t]he world of small presses and magazines is frequently compared to the farm system in baseball—recruiting grounds for the big leagues,” but actually “many are *sui generis*, offering their own special contribution to literature.”¹⁵⁵ The journals that published *tamizdat* in Western languages and edited *tamizdat* publications had something special to offer and differed in their approaches to the major newspapers.

¹⁵³ Garton Ash, Blake, Sontag, Styron, and Wästberg, “Crackdown in Hungary.”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Mitgang, “Publishing: Human Rights,” C24.

The journals themselves mirrored a variety of political attitudes that stretched from fervent anti-communism¹⁵⁶ to a rather orthodox Russian standpoint,¹⁵⁷ New Leftist convictions,¹⁵⁸ or to more literary approaches. *Cross Currents* and *Formations*, for instance, were interested in depicting the aesthetic variety of Central and East European literature. The political aspect was placed in the background. Just as inside the *samizdat* sphere, where a great diversity of circles existed, journals in the West represented the entire spectrum of political adherence.¹⁵⁹ However, in their aim to introduce uncensored literature from the 'Other Europe' into the Western canon, they were part of the same cultural project. Along with publishing houses headed by émigrés, such as the Czechoslovak Sixty-Eight Publishers in Toronto or the Russian Ardis in Michigan, these journals attempted to obtain and publish censored works from unknown parts of Europe and increase their availability in the West. However, their motivations for publishing Central European non-conformist literature differed, as expressed in their editorial statements and anniversary issues.¹⁶⁰ All of the journals promoted the rights of writers.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ *Possev* and *Grani* were highly political and are said to have been financially supported for their literary activity.

¹⁵⁷ The Russian journal *Kontinent*, for instance, was established under the protection and financial support of the Springer-Ullstein Publishing House and triggered a kind of literary scandal by left-wing intellectuals such as Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass in Germany. Grass, an open critic of Soviet-type communism, accused the editors of *Kontinent* of financial dependence on the rather right-wing Springer. See the summary by Vladimir Maximov in F83.2.2, George Bailey Collection, Sheet 1–5. Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Bremen, Historical Archive.

¹⁵⁸ *L'Alternative* and its subsequent version *La Nouvelle Alternative* sought societal alternatives based on new left-wing ideas.

¹⁵⁹ Among the journals taken into consideration are *Encounter*, *Preuves*, *Der Monat*, *Problems of Communism*, *L'Alternative/La Nouvelle Alternative*, *Kursbuch*, *L'Autre Europe*, the *New York Review of Books*, *Index on Censorship*, *Cahiers de l'Est*, *Gegenstimmen* and *Kontinent*.

¹⁶⁰ "A nos lecteurs"; "Editorial: An unsere Leserinnen und Leser," 98; "To the Reader"; Matejka, "Introduction to the Electronic Version of *Cross Currents*," 5; Scammell, "Notebook"; "Statement of Aims."; "A Word to Our Readers"; the anniversary issues Phillips and Rahv, eds., *The Partisan Reader* and Philips, *A Partisan View*; Silvers and Epstein, eds., *Anthology: The New York Review of Books and Selections from the First Two Issues*.

¹⁶¹ Among the journals in Western languages were *Index on Censorship* (London 1972, English), *The Samizdat Bulletin* (San Mateo, California 1973, English), *Kontinent* (Berlin and Paris 1974, and six other journals in French, German,

Independent of their individual publishing philosophies, most of the journals took the Helsinki Accords as a guideline for their contribution to the "freer movement of ideas" and literatures in Europe. Contrary to the way communist officials imagined it, the journals hoped to create a sphere of new dialogue that would blur the symbolic, cultural, and political borders imposed by the Iron Curtain, both within Europe and across the Atlantic.¹⁶² Having recognized "the importance of the dissemination of information from the other participating states,"¹⁶³ they tried to increase the availability of non-conformist works that were unknown to the average reader. While some of the journals hoped to create a literary Helsinki by publishing non-conformist literature, others explicitly confronted Western intellectuals with the sufferings of persecuted writers, in particular, *Index on Censorship* and the *New York Review of Books*.

For many years, Helsinki Watch financially backed *Index*. The editor Michael Scammell begins his editorial with a reference to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stating that *Index* will provide "information about the ramifications of censorship and the

and Russian), *Cahiers de l'Est* (Paris 1975, French), *L 76: Die Zeitschrift für Demokratie und Sozialismus: Politische und literarische Beiträge* (Cologne 1976, German), *Cahier du Samizdat* (Brussels 1978, French), *L'Alternative* (Paris 1979, French), *Gegenstimmen* (Vienna 1980, German), *Cross Currents* (Michigan 1982, English), *L'Autre Europe* (Paris 1984, French), *Lettre Internationale* (Paris 1984, French), *Formations* (Wisconsin 1984, English), *East European Reporter* (London 1985, English), and *Uncaptive Minds* (Washington 1988, English). Between 1974 and 1982 the German-language version *Kontinent: Unabhängiges Forum Russischer und Osteuropäischer Autoren* was published in West Berlin by Verlag Ullstein and supported by the Axel Springer Publishing House. It was edited by Cornelia Gerstenmaier in Bonn. The Russian version, which appeared as КОНТИНЕНТ under Kontinent Verlag in Darmstadt, was edited by Vladimir Maximov in Paris. From 1983 onwards the German version was renamed *Kontinent: Forum für Ost-West Fragen* and was published as a quarterly by Burg Verlag in Stuttgart/Bonn. It was supported by the newly founded Kontinent Society (founded in Bonn in 1982), which carried the German name "Gesellschaft Kontinent e.V.-Kulturelle Vereinigung zur Unterstützung der Menschenrechte in Osteuropa." See *Flensburger Tagesblatt*, October 29, 1982. *Kontinent* 6.1, Pressestimmen. Axel Springer Corporate Records (ASCA), Berlin: "Kontinent" Collection.

¹⁶² Niedermüller, "Kultur, Transfer und Politik," 166.

¹⁶³ Helsinki Final Act, Questions Relating to Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean, Co-operation in the Humanitarian and Other Fields, 2. Information, i) Improvement of the circulation of, access to, and exchange of information, ii) Printed information; document published on August 1, 1975.

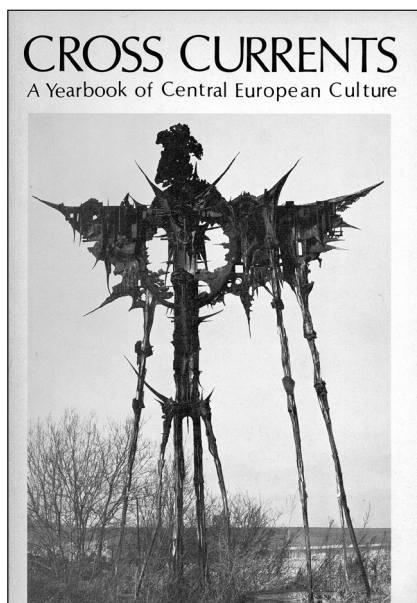
Figure 46: Cover of the first issue of *Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture*, Vol. 1 (1982). Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

thousand and one ways that are found to suppress man's right to freedom of expression."¹⁶⁴ The journal's name evokes a number of symbols: like "the Catholic *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, it was to be an index of violations of intellectual freedom," but also "an index finger pointing accusingly at the guilty oppressors."¹⁶⁵

The establishment of *Index on Censorship* went hand in hand with the formation of an initiative called Writers and Scholars International (WSI). Scammell outlines the aim of these joint initiatives, contending that "information was needed about those most likely to suffer from censorship and curbs upon freedom of expression, that is to say scholars and writers, since the written word traditionally attracts more opprobrium from the authorities than, say, music or the visual arts."¹⁶⁶ He continues:

[b]ooks, words, images have an inalienable right to pass from person to person, across frontiers, oceans and hemispheres, and no authority on earth has the right to stop them. We at INDEX will do everything in our power to see that nobody does stop them, and if that should mean technically "smuggling," then we will smuggle as well.¹⁶⁷

As a registered charity WSI was meant to "act as an information bank and as a sort of news agency, supplying the media and interested orga-



¹⁶⁴ Scammell, "Notebook," 5.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

nizations or individuals with details of what is happening to the people concerned.”¹⁶⁸ Scammell envisioned his charity taking an active future role in seeking “maximum publicity for cases where it thinks it will help.” In this, the WSI differed from such organizations as PEN and AI “both of which it will otherwise cooperate” with.¹⁶⁹ *Index* was intended as WSI’s media outlet.

Aside from émigrés, whose biographies predestined them to engage in bridging the mental gap between their home countries and their host countries, intellectuals were the primary forces behind these journals. Scammell noted that “academics of all disciplines and degrees often perform tremendous services by keeping some sort of lines of communication open with ‘closed’ territories, maintaining contacts and carrying ideas (and sometimes even books) back and forth.”¹⁷⁰ Intellectuals like Timothy Garton Ash were convinced they had a moral obligation to help create a literary market in order to counteract Soviet intolerance towards a free book market: “[t]he free market of publications annoys us sometimes in the West: these constant superlatives, this oversupply of books and reviews. But if there is something worse than a book market, then it is the emission of a book market.”¹⁷¹ George Theiner remembers the original aim of *Index on Censorship* mostly as a literary endeavor in support of persecuted writers: “[i]t was to help banned, censored, and persecuted writers, whatever their nationality, color, religious creed, or political persuasion was, that *Index on Censorship* came into being in 1972. To help them by alerting the public to their fate and by giving them the satisfaction of seeing at least a small sample of their output in print.”¹⁷²

The *NYRB* pursued a broader approach to the human rights issue. This review, which has been America’s premier literary and intellectual journal since 1963, undoubtedly made one of the greatest contributions to publishing translated *samizdat* literature. Apart from giving the East a chance to be published untouched by censorship, the review was meant to serve as a platform for appeals by Central European and Russian intellectuals for political and financial support from the West. In 1977, for instance, Adam Michnik appealed to a Western audience through the

¹⁶⁸ Scammell, “The Letter in the Bottle,” 10.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Garton Ash, “Polnisches Als-ob,” 84. Translation by the author.

¹⁷² Theiner, “Introduction,” 12.

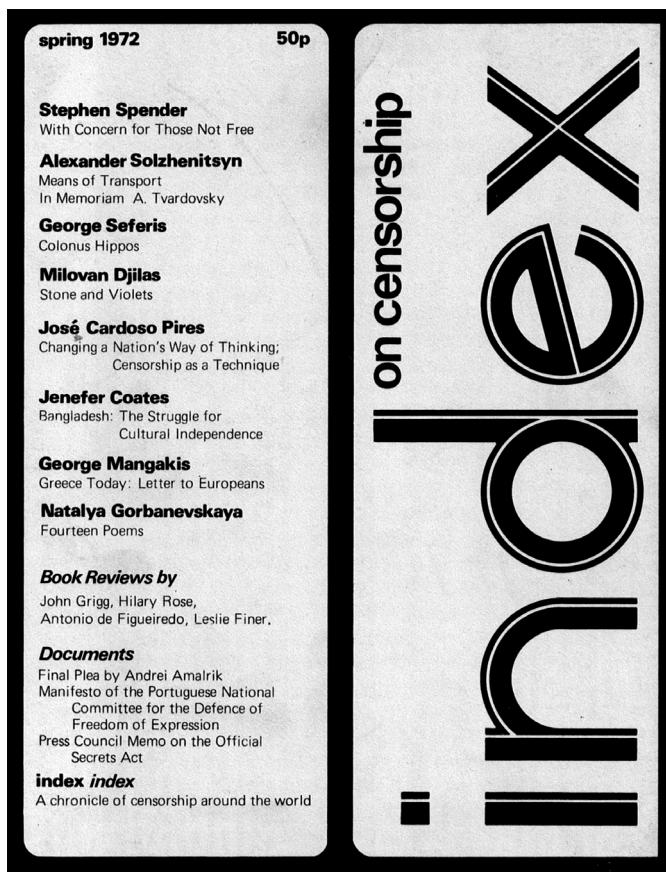


Figure 47: Cover of the first issue of *Index on Censorship*, Spring 1972. Archive of Index on Censorship, London.

NYRB “for yet greater support, both in the form of financial [...] and in the form of moral and political backing.”¹⁷³ These appeals not only tell us something about persecuted intellectuals, but also elucidate the common interests of the Western signatories.

One appeal for the release of a Czech prisoner in February 1989, for example, embodies all the hopes of non-conformist activists from across the Iron Curtain. They longed to initiate an “independent culture,”

¹⁷³ Michnik, “The Polish Resistance,” 3.

create "counter-culture activities," provide "opportunities for the playing of independent musical groups," edit "*samizdat* collections," devote "energies to the visual art which had been expelled from the galleries," reflect critically about "Czechoslovak independent culture" and create an "independent spiritual climate."¹⁷⁴ These aspirations were published with a call by Barbara Sproul, a representative of Amnesty International in New York, for the release of a group of Czech prisoners. Sproul accentuated that these Czech intellectuals were imprisoned for their "expression of politically 'unacceptable' views," and that this was "in violation of their right to free expression." She further developed the demands of the Czech appeal by "calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all of these prisoners of conscience."¹⁷⁵

The publication of appeals in the West on behalf of political prisoners, as well as the enunciation of the violations of human rights, sometimes led to a direct change of Western foreign policy towards suppressed countries. In a 1980 *NYRB* article Leonard Schapiro condemns the widespread behavior of Western governments that silently accepted the Soviet treatment of human rights activists and others similarly repressed. "It is one of the comfortable excuses frequently advanced in the West," he says, "that the Soviet authorities are indifferent to outside protests, and that in any case public protest only intensifies the determination of the Soviet authorities to pursue their own course." Schapiro reveals that evidence did not support Western claims of not wanting to further complicate the life of prisoners, as the Soviet Union's image abroad played a decisive role in the attitude towards them:

its image abroad will continue to influence the Politburo, for two reasons. One is the fear of loss of support from foreign communists and left-wing parties which a tarnished image of Soviet domestic realities might encourage. And the other is the apprehension that conduct at home might endanger the flow from abroad of the technology, grain, and credits on which the Soviet economy will continue to depend, at any rate for so long as it maintains its mammoth expenditures on armaments.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Barbara Sproul et al, "Prisoners of Conscience."

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Schapiro, "Soviet Heroes."

The Russian physicist Yuri Orlov, for instance, who had been sentenced to decades in prison for having been active in the human rights movement, was released at America's urgent call.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, this event was not typical. In a 2005 interview Robert Silvers reflects on the impact of Western appeals on the release of prisoners. He explains that at the *New York Review of Books* they never knew what effect their appeals had on regimes. Following the reactions of the officials they realized that sometimes restrictions became harsher, and at other times the conditions in prison improved. However, as Silvers remembers, there was one instance when the *Review* published an article about an arrested Russian author who was released immediately.¹⁷⁸ Thus, while appeals did not always have a positive effect they certainly *could*, and it was therefore worth it to try.

Apart from the actual effects of appeals and of the long reports about the inhumane treatment of underground writers, one of the *New York Review of Books's* main objectives was to let writers comment on the political and literary developments inside the 'Other Europe.' Silvers explains that they focused particularly on those dictatorships inside the Soviet sphere they perceived as absolutely unacceptable repressors of the most elementary freedoms. And in so far as the editors saw human rights mainly as rights in relation to the state, they hoped to support non-conformist writers in their struggle for the freedom of expression.¹⁷⁹

The contest for each writer's right to write concerned every critical author. As Silvers remembers, in New York they became aware of the changes inside the 'Other Europe' through certain individuals who challenged dictatorships and stood up to face repressive regimes. Because of their courage and moral strength, these authors became highly respected among New York intellectuals. To publish these authors, who embodied the principle of political and literary freedom, seemed to Silvers the most natural thing to do and allowed the *New York Review of Books* to transmit conceptions of human rights to an American readership. Consequently, they began to publish authors such as Solzhenitsyn, Brodsky, Sinyavsky, Daniel, and Sakharov, in particular, whose writings, subsequent arrest, and life in Gorky represented an ideal case for supporting human rights issues.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ See Orlov, *Dangerous Thought*.

¹⁷⁸ Silvers, interview by the author.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Inspired by Russian and later Central European authors, the *NYRB* served the international human rights movement with a platform for intellectual debates. With its national circulation of over one hundred fifteen thousand copies the *Review* provided a degree of coverage while, more importantly, reaching a large audience. By documenting human rights violations behind the Iron Curtain, it investigated topics that were also relevant to American society, especially from 1976 onwards when Jimmy Carter was elected President. Carter attached great importance to human rights and the topic experienced a surge in popularity. As a result of the third basket, as well as of a general change of attitude towards human rights, the *New York Review of Books's* focus on the stories of uncensored writers was openly received. Silvers explains that the human rights perspective was the central issue in dealing with writers from Central and Eastern Europe. Even today, he argues, the *Review* is primarily interested in writers who do not have the most elementary rights, that is the right to travel, to assemble, and to express themselves in literary and political terms.¹⁸¹

In an interview in 2005 Jason Epstein, one of the *NYRB's* founders, talked about the connection between the promotion of human rights in the Western context and the *samizdat* material that reached the West. When asked why he published the works of so many underground writers, Epstein stressed the absolute moral necessity to do so: “[t]hat was [...] the right thing to do. The Poles and the Hungarians, the East Germans were suffering. Those were terrible regimes. So, the more you could do to get rid of them, the better. You could publish *samizdat* wherever you wanted and you could even sell *samizdat*. How many copies of Solzhenitsyn’s were sold? The publishers could benefit that way too.”¹⁸² Many of the other journals shared this view, aiming to contribute to a greater visibility of human rights violations. The reprinting of complete documents became a priority. The *Samizdat Bulletin*, published in San Mateo, California, observed in its first issue in May 1973 that “until today, the publication of these documents in the English language either was not available, or was obtainable only in the form of brief, fragmentary quotations.” For this reason the *Bulletin* wanted “to acquaint the English-speaking reader with the ideas and direct course of free thought in the Soviet Union.” It rejected the idea of embellishing original texts to

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Epstein, interview by the author.

make them suit the Western literary market. Instead, its editors wanted to show that their journal was actually “inspired by *Samizdat* (or ‘Self-publishing’)” insofar as the material was “prepared and distributed on the initiative of private individuals, in limited printing, forsaking the interest of commercial gain.” As such, the journal’s distribution depended to a great extent on the support of its readers.¹⁸³

Other journals were far more concerned with the cultural translation of *samizdat* texts, hoping to extract usable contents for its Western audiences. The translation was often completed after long commentaries and reviews of the original documents. The monthly journal *Cahiers du Samizdat* in Brussels published information and articles from the “parallel and underground press from the USSR” in “French annotated translation.” Topics that were discussed in the Soviet underground, such as the “problems of human rights, of the freedom of conscience and religion, struggle of class and nationalities,” occupied an important place.¹⁸⁴

While many Western editors and publishers were highly interested in publishing *témoignages*—that is, reports by suppressed and persecuted writers from the East—some of the above-mentioned journals pursued a more literary strategy. Instead of only printing appeals and letters of support, they published extracts from books, poems, literary letters, and essays, offering a wide insight into the literature from ‘over there.’ The broad variety of literature that flowed from all parts of the ‘Other Europe’ into the West left traces on the outlook and on the editorial aims of leading Western publishers and journals. Yet, literature from the ‘Other Europe’ could also create ideological conflicts among Western publishers and editors. An editorial of the Austrian journal *Gegenstimmen*, which appeared between 1980 and 1987, documents the political divide underground writings could evoke in the Western sphere of alternative media. Even a kind of competition emerged among the different media involved in publishing uncensored literature from the region. Taking a socialist stance, *Gegenstimmen* saw its aim in breaking the monopoly of so-called Western anti-communist forces on reporting about Eastern Europe:

¹⁸³ *The Samizdat Bulletin*, San Mateo, California, no. 1 (May 1973).

¹⁸⁴ *Cahiers du Samizdat*, monthly journal, Brussels, edited by Anthony de Meeus, no. 117 (February 1986). Translation by the author.

here is a fear of engaging in a common cause with the anti-communist forces, who for a long time had a quasi-monopoly on criticizing Eastern Europe. But in that respect some things took a turn for the better [...] the interest and the sympathy of the cold warriors for dissidents cooled down since they no longer served just to bear witness to the wickedness of communism, but instead started to organize themselves independently and to destabilize the bureaucratic regimes in the East.¹⁸⁵

The editors believed that reporting about developments from beyond the Iron Curtain and solidarity with progressive forces should not be left to the anti-communist media. They accused the Western left of a lack of interest in developing a political and cultural opposition in the 'Other Europe.' They even went as far as to speak of a "psycho-political bloc" against the support of the opposition: "*Gegenstimmen*," they wrote, "should be an instrument to arouse interest in Eastern Europe. Because the Western left, and not least the Austrian Left, to whom this journal is above all addressed, has formed a psycho-political bloc against engaging themselves in Eastern Europe and aligning themselves with the oppositionists."¹⁸⁶ The editors argued that it was high time to deconstruct the ideological division between the Western left and the non-conformist forces 'over there,' who were no longer willing to engage in a socialist cause that had lost its credibility:

[t]he reason that Western leftists lack interest in and solidarity with Eastern Europe is based on the fact that many dissidents of the civil movements and the opposition over there don't want to have anything to do with "socialism" (isn't that understandable with *that* type of socialism?) or demand "simply" human rights, and have many illusions about the political constitution of the "free world."¹⁸⁷

The Western left's reluctance to give up their belief in Soviet-type socialism was thought to have caused the long-lasting indifference

¹⁸⁵ "Editorial," *Gegenstimmen: Solidarität mit der demokratischen und sozialistischen Opposition in Osteuropa*, no. 1, (June–September 1980): 1. Translation by the author.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

towards activities of the 'Other Europe' oppositions. It was exactly this attitude that the editors hoped to change: "Eastern European societies are still—even if they are just a few kilometers away from here—for many people *terra incognita*, unknown territory. Territory which still needs to be discovered by the Western Left."¹⁸⁸ Only when the Western left became convinced of the necessity of working together with the anti-state forces inside the Soviet Bloc would it be possible to draw the necessary conclusions from real socialism and to develop new strategies for creating a pan-European progressive *Internationale*. "We have to succeed in making the progressive forces in East and West work hand in hand," the editors wrote, in order to develop "some kind of alliance between the workers' movement in the West and the opposition in the East." Even if, they argued, the damage to socialism could not be undone, a new platform for discussing a future socialist Europe had to be created.¹⁸⁹

This example illustrates the conflicting potential inherent in discussions about uncensored literature in the Western media. It also shows that, despite different ideological stances, most of the journals interested in the 'Other Europe' shared the hope of contributing to the creation of new forms of communication between East and West. Even if underground authors from the GDR mainly used the West German literary market for distributing their publications, for instance, they also succeeded in counteracting the GDR's isolationist media policy. Some literary projects emerged that aimed at German-German cooperation, such as the journal *L'76 Demokratie und Sozialismus* which appeared in twelve issues between 1976–1979 in Cologne; it was edited by Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, and Carola Stern, supported by Jiří Pelikán.¹⁹⁰ In its pages authors from the GDR and other Bloc countries jointly published their non-conformist literature. As a literary platform it compared the existing oppositional movements and discussed options for future societal projects between East and West and across the Soviet sphere.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ *Die Zeitschrift für Demokratie und Sozialismus: Politische und literarische Beiträge*. For a detailed index see <http://www.hier-ist-es-schoen.de/HP/Historisches/L76.htm> (last accessed September 7, 2010). "Zeitmosaik," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 23, 1975. HU OSA 300-80-8, RFE/RL Research Institute Soviet Red Archives, Non-USSR Biographical Files, Box 15. See also "Neue Zeitschrift L 76," *Die Zeit*, September 26, 1975, <http://www.zeit.de/1975/40/Neue-Zeitschrift-L-76> (last accessed September 7, 2010).

The various editorials and articles show that the idea of Europe engaged them in an overwhelming way. Besides the human rights discourse on the writer's right to write and the engagement with uncovering human rights abuses in the 'Other Europe,' references to a common literary Europe figure in most of the journals. Dumitru Tsepeneag's editorial from a 1975 issue of *Cahiers de l'Est* expresses the absurdity of the European division: "[o]ne fine day, Europe will find herself cut in two."¹⁹¹ Assuming that little could be done to change Europe's political division, publishers such as Vladimir Maximov of *Kontinent*, Michael Scammell of *Index on Censorship*, and Antonín Liehm of *Lettre Internationale* hoped to at least undermine Europe's cultural partition. Liehm explains how he tried to foster a rapprochement of Europe's two literary halves:

[t]he Cold War was winding down at the time, but Europe and the world were still divided and one half viewed the other exclusively through the lenses of half-truths and half-lies. At the time we went to battle against the former regime with the aim of demonstrating that in the field of culture, at least, Europe was still a single entity, that its riches lay in the diversity of its culture. But these cultures knew little of each other, and this was true on both sides of the Iron Curtain.¹⁹²

In *Lettre Internationale* Liehm published literary texts by authors from both captive and free countries, mainly out of a curiosity to see what kind of cultural and literary cross-fertilization would take place. "We wanted these cultures to confront one another within a single publication on the basis of common themes and subjects," he writes, "and at the same time we wanted to show that Stalinism had not eliminated culture in the West, nor had it undermined its Europeaness, nor its quality, regardless of whether that culture could not express itself publicly or in any other way."¹⁹³ Liehm wanted to show "that the borders between cultures were not identical with the borders between countries."¹⁹⁴ The destabilization of these borders, however, took a great effort from publishers and editors,

¹⁹¹ "Un beau jour, L'Europe se retrouva coupée en deux." Tsepeneag, "Editorial," 1. Translated by the author.

¹⁹² Liehm, "When We Began."

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

as many writers had become used to the mental separation of Europe. In *The Other Europe* Jacques Rupnik even argues that Europe's partition "is sustained not just by brute force but by a 'Yalta of the spirit.'" ¹⁹⁵

Proposals to reestablish a pan-European literary community emerged from an unwillingness to accept Europe's mental division. Susan Sontag was convinced that the emergent "venerable institution of international writers' conferences and congresses," in particular, was a very "European idea." Such transnational encounters contributed to the "transposition to the whole world of the very idea of Europe," of the belief in the existence of "a transnational federation of idiosyncratic communities unified by common interests and ideals." ¹⁹⁶ The question of Europe's common literariness was so crucial that an entire conference in Vienna, organized by *Le Monde*, was dedicated to the question "Is there a literary Europe?" ¹⁹⁷ The Polish émigré Stanisław Barańczak expressed his conviction that a single novel by an author such as Milan Kundera, "when translated into English, tells the American audience more about Czechoslovakia" than "ten years of *Newsweek* coverage." Similarly, a single film by Andrzej Wajda could serve as an "incomparably better source of information about Eastern Europe than a thousand interviews with General Jaruzelski." Politicians could "lie and be believed," but in a serious "work of art we cannot fail to discover a false note because it simply hurts our ears." ¹⁹⁸

Literature's transfer allowed "international communication, ideas, facts, and human protests somehow [to] get through and have an influence." ¹⁹⁹ Stephen Spender asserts in *Index on Censorship* that "[t]his is not just an act of charity. It is a way of extending an international consciousness, traversing political boundaries." ²⁰⁰ In accordance with the idea of the third basket, Eastern and Western intellectuals looked for methods of mutual communication in order to increase the exchange of ideas. Michnik remembers how *Lettre Internationale* helped loosen the Iron Curtain. He states that it was "the only journal that has succeeded in penetrating the Iron Curtain and springing over the Berlin Wall

¹⁹⁵ Rupnik, "In Search of Central Europe," 7.

¹⁹⁶ Sontag, "When Writers Talk Among Themselves," BR1.

¹⁹⁷ The original title of the conference was "Y-a-t-il une Europe littéraire?" Cited in Laignel-Lavastine, "L'autre Europe et nous," 123. Translated by the author.

¹⁹⁸ Barańczak, "E. E: The Extraterritorial," 14–15.

¹⁹⁹ Solzhenitsyn, "Interview with Two Western Correspondents," 43.

²⁰⁰ Litvinov, "Introduction," 6.

in order to create an area for dialogue.”²⁰¹ Although surely not representing the sole journal to encourage this type of dialogue, it managed to publish a broad variety of literary articles by Eastern and Western European authors on its pages. The publishers of *Kontinent*, too, wanted to remind their readers of the fact that the many borders on a European map should not be perceived as eternal and definite.²⁰² The editors hoped to show “how culture and thinking, the entire creativity of these countries, which are separated from us through administrative decisions, go beyond these restrictions.”²⁰³ They wanted to give rise to mutual influence beyond the artificial East-West border. The title of the journal was a symbol against the logic of the Iron Curtain, targeting the entire cultural and literary continent and opposing the idea of a political expanse ruled by totalitarian regimes. The journal had a vested interest in connecting underground writers across the ‘Other Europe’ and engaging them in common debates.

Kontinent had a wide readership.²⁰⁴ George Bailey, the journal’s coordinating editor at Springer Publishing House, estimated that at least several hundred copies of each issue of the Russian version reached the literary underground.²⁰⁵ This ongoing stream of literature and information into the Soviet Union prevented the isolation of the country’s literary underground. These border-crossing literary contacts were of crucial importance for *Kontinent*’s project. Against this backdrop it is revealing that the Association des Amis de la Revue Continent, established in Paris to disseminate the journal, was headed not only by Vladimir Maximov, the initiator of this endeavor, but also by Jerzy Giedroyc, the founder and editor of the Polish émigré journal *Kultura*.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Michnik, “Je refuse de le croire,” 22. Translated by the author.

²⁰² *Kontinent* was published by Vladimir Maximov and morally supported by Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, as well as financially supported by Axel Springer. See “The Friends of *Kontinent* Bulletin,” vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1978), in F83/2.2. Sheet 4. George Bailey Collection. Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Bremen, Historical Archive.

²⁰³ Conquest, “Kontinent und der Westen,” 3.

²⁰⁴ “Letter to Mr. Springer (Unsigned),” part of *The Friends of Kontinent Bulletin*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1978). F83.2.2, Sheet 12. Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Bremen, Historical Archive, Sheet 12.

²⁰⁵ “George Bailey” report, F83/2.2, Sheet 1–5, Sheet 2, George Bailey Collection, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Bremen, Historical Archive.

²⁰⁶ The Kontinent Society (translated from the German “Gesellschaft Kontinent e.V.”) was founded in 1982 in Bonn. “Association des Amis de la Revue Con-

Giedroyc was the vice-president of the association and also a member of the editorial board, proving that there was close cooperation between émigrés from various ‘Other European’ countries. Émigrés such as Milovan Djilas, Eugène Ionesco, Mihailo Mihailov, and Ludek Packman were on *Kontinent*’s editorial board.²⁰⁷ In order to go beyond a dialogue among members of the Soviet-type countries, the editors of the journal hoped to create a new, undivided continent, united by an anti-totalitarian conviction: “we—Eastern and Western Europe—are the two halves of the same continent, and we must hear and understand each other before it is too late.”²⁰⁸ Vladimir Bukovsky even went as far as to argue that no crucial difference existed between East and West. During a conference he posed the provocative question: “[w]here do you want to draw the line between us? My dear friend, where is the East and where the West? Where is our compass? We don’t possess any.”²⁰⁹ Bukovsky formulates an almost utopian hope for Europe, stating that there there was not “any difference between the Western and the Eastern human.” He wanted to see in every human an individual personality that was independent from any ideology and “ready to defend his human dignity.”²¹⁰

Eugène Ionescu further developed this idea, expressing the hope that the still-existing distance between the divided people could be overcome. Full understanding of the non-conformist movement inside the Soviet Union could only be achieved if a “real encounter” between the West and the dissidents occurred, which would result in shared experiences. Only then could the “intellectual world” of East and West “build one common entity.”²¹¹ *Kontinent*’s joint editorial board embodied this unity. To offer Western intellectuals and writers the chance to shape the journal’s outlook, Maximov included Saul Bellow, Raymond Aron, Robert

continent,” F83/2.2, Folder Springer–Solzhenitsyn, Sheet 1. George Bailey Collection, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Bremen, Historical Archive.

²⁰⁷ “The Friends of *Kontinent* Bulletin,” vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1978). George Bailey Collection, F83.2.2, Sheet 4. Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Bremen, Historical Archive.

²⁰⁸ “Statement from the Editors,” *Kontinent: The Alternative Voice of Russia and Eastern Europe*. First English Edition (1977). Sheet 7–9, Sheet 9. Axel Springer Corporate Records (ASCA), Berlin: “Kontinent” Collection.

²⁰⁹ Bukowski, “Kontinent Podiumsdiskussion.”

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 255.

²¹¹ Ionescu cited in “Kontinent Podiumsdiskussion,” 247. Translation by the author.

Conquest, George Bailey, Arthur Koestler, and Ignacio Salome in its editorial board.

Lettre Internationale's approach to the writers of the 'Other Europe' was expressed in the journal's wish to recreate a pan-European culture through the reintegration of those European literatures that were forgotten and isolated behind the Iron Curtain into the Western canon of literature. The driving force in turning towards these overlooked European regions was to find great literature and poetry. With his journal Liehm intended to offer an alternative to the mainstream French media, in which one only heard of the 'Other Europe' in moments of political and economic crisis. He did not accept this simplified approach towards the marginal historical regions of Europe and focused mainly on politically dissident writers, wanting to initiate a literary dialogue between East and West by making creative voices from both parts of Europe heard.²¹² As such, he hoped to contribute to a change in the West's understanding of what had always been subsumed under the term 'Eastern Europe':

[w]e would like it if Central Europe as well as Eastern Europe, including Russia, were no longer presented as a relative of a world far away, only audible in moments of crises or on occasions of such and such dissidence, but that their original voices, so often suppressed, were regularly heard and that thereby a continuity of dialogue and an exchange of ideas could be re-established.²¹³

In many of the alternative publishing initiatives a change in focus took place, shifting from the widespread political use of writings to a new awareness of the importance of literary creativity. Resisting a merely political approach to literature, various authors and publishers wanted to promote a deeper understanding of the inherently non-conformist character of literature in general. In "Comedy is Everywhere" Milan Kundera sheds light on literature's core by describing the creative

²¹² The term "dialogue" is taken from the journals' self-representations, in which they describe forms of cross-border communication. Lesage explains the emergence of dialogue as a means to debate the differences between East and West and to express the rejection of the Soviet model. Lesage, "La Place de l'Europe Centrale."

²¹³ "A nos lecteurs." Translation by the author.

process of writing as a sign of societal non-conformity.²¹⁴ The title of his article refers to the most genuine Czechoslovak form of literary writing—comedy—which expressed the daily realities of life under Soviet-style socialism. Comedy, or any kind of true literature, could only emerge out of an act of autonomous thinking and not out of pure political resistance. The inherent non-conformity of literature became visible when an author succeeded in expressing an individual and autonomous point of view:

[t]he nonconformity of the novel, however, does not lie in its identification with a radical oppositional political line but in presenting a different, independent, unique view of the world. Thus, and only thus, can the novel attack conventional opinions and attitudes. There are commentators who are obsessed with the demon of simplification. They murder books by reducing them to a mere political interpretation. Such people are only interested in so-called Eastern writers as long as their books are banned. As far as they're concerned, there are official writers and opposition writers—and that is all.²¹⁵

In “Dissidents Against Their Will” Pavel Tigríd and Ota Filip characterize the new underground writers as basing “their popularity at home and in the West not on the cheapest literary oppositional effect” but rather on “the best traditions of the Czech and Slovak literature.”²¹⁶ Similarly, Andrei Sakharov formulated his expectations as for the works published in *Kontinent* by referring to the inherent non-conformity of art: “[f]rom the literary part of *Kontinent* I expect an enlightenment of the most hidden places of life, into which only the intuitive glance of art can enter.”²¹⁷ Joseph Brodsky explained the difficult process of literary creation by indicating the inherently far-reaching implications of literature itself. He stressed that while literary creativity offered a highly political message, it could not be understood as “politically engaged literature”: “I think that for the writer, who first of all concerns himself with his own work, the deeper he plunges into it, the greater will be the consequences—literary, aesthetic, and of course political as well.”²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Kundera, “Comedy is Everywhere,” 3–7.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 5–6.

²¹⁶ Tigríd and Filip, “Dissidenten wider Willen,” 10. Translation by the author.

²¹⁷ Sacharov, “Geleitwort,” 7.

²¹⁸ Cited in Scammell, “Interview with Josif Brodsky,” 152.

In an interview in 2005 the Hungarian *samizdat* writer János Kenedi argues for the unquestionable necessity of creative freedom, without which a writer could not contribute to the advancement of knowledge through literature: “[i]f somebody decides to be a critical writer then he cannot really consider what sort of liberty he is given by any existing political system. So there never was a big decision or a big kind of theatrical decision.”²¹⁹ Furthermore, he points out that the most natural thing for those who wanted to be critical writers was to direct their writings towards both a national audience and an international readership. If a work addressed questions of a broad intellectual scope, it was not written just for the domestic reader but should become public: “[i]t is quite natural that if you are publishing, [it] will be published in French, English, or German.”²²⁰ Kenedi's remarks demonstrate how writing and literary creativity are not compatible with the restrictions of a political regime. However, it was not simply the external political situation that determined a writer's creative freedom, but a certain inner freedom as well.

In his introduction to *Talks on the Moldau*, a series of interviews with non-conformist Czechoslovak writers, Liehm writes: “freedom of the human lies in himself and not around him. And if he does not have it in himself, he will not find it anywhere and he will not get it anywhere. And this is twice as valid for intellectuals because they can only be useful for the human by means of this freedom.”²²¹ If writers wanted to convey their ideas and experiences, they had to maintain a certain intellectual independence. Thus, non-conformity inhered in literature. Sinyavsky, too, was convinced that being a “writer” meant to “talk to people about the most important things, the most dangerous ones,” that this was the “most extreme, bloodiest appeal of the human to humans.” As soon as writers “grasp the pencil” they can only say “forbidden things.”²²² In their editorial statement in *Kontinent*, Maximov and Solzhenitsyn propose an approach towards uncensored writings by referring to the creative variety of literary forms that many non-conformist authors from the ‘Other Europe’ employed in order to express their individual experiences:

²¹⁹ Kenedi, interview by author.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Liehm, “Über Kultur, über Politik.”

²²² Sinyavsky, “Literatur als Prozess,” 137.

[w]e see the task of our journal not so much to be concerned with political polemics against an aggressive totalitarianism, but rather that it should confront it with the literary creativity and spirituality of Eastern Europe, a creativity which has been enriched both by bitter personal experience and a new vision of history that arose from it. In our opinion, this concept seems to provide a sufficiently broad and fundamental basis to unite all anti-totalitarian forces of Eastern Europe in their dialogue with the West. He that has ears to hear let him hear!²²³

The experiences depicted in this literature threatened the regime more than any kind of political polemic. When Natalya Gorbanevskaya gave an interview in the West in 1977 she assumed that her poetry aroused so much anger among Soviet officials because of an underlying atmosphere apparent in her writings, not because of any kind of open political message: "Probably the spirit of this poetry was intolerable [...] Something had come through in my poetry: it was simply poetry about unhappy love, but this was enough to brand me as a decadent and pessimist."²²⁴ This nebulous "atmosphere" compelled Soviet officials to mark her as a dissident poet. Gorbanevskaya's poetry was used by *Index on Censorship* to argue against the widespread Western logic uniting concepts of censorship and political writing. By publishing pure poetry that had been censored not for its political meaning but for its form, *Index's* publisher Michael Scammell offered a new interpretation of Soviet censorship. He introduced the interrelationship between *belles lettres* in its purest form and censorship. He argued that the Soviet censors were not only interested in political writings but that the control of aesthetic and literary forms was as vast as the control of political content.

As Soviet censorship was directed against all kinds of literature—"good, bad, and indifferent"—*Index's* aim was to publicize the whole variety of this literature to "show what serious losses ensue for society when the censor or suppressor is allowed to have free reign." Therefore, Scammell fully disagreed with the perspective of the *Times Literary Supplement* that the *Index* should not publish Gorbanevskaya's non-political work, challenging the notion that they were trying to turn her "into

²²³ Maximov and Solzhenitsyn, "Continent," 64.

²²⁴ Gorbanevskaya, "Writing for *Samizdat*," 29.

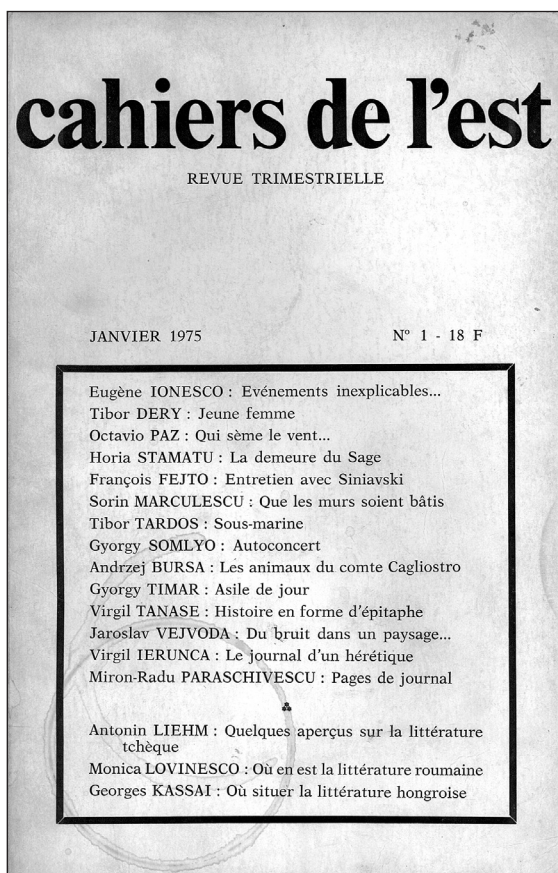


Figure 48: Cover of the first issue of *Cahiers de l'Est*. Revue Trimestrielle, no. 1, January 1975. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

a 'political' writer." For Scammell, publishing her work proved "what excellence was being suppressed" and that Soviet censors by no means limited "themselves to suppressing only 'political' works." For this reason, *Index's* literature section and its so-called non-political works bleakly disclosed censorship practices from the 'Other Europe.' *Index's* readers would thus best understand that the "poet's clash with the authorities is so often no mere political squabble." Instead, it stemmed "from the very nature of his vocation," as art and literature by nature were "incompatible with censorship and the absence of freedom of expression." Therefore,

"Gorbanevskaya's literary vocation and her literary values" were predestined to bring her into conflict with the authorities, be it through her book *Polden': delo o demonstracii 25 avgusta 1968 goda na Krasnoj Ploščadi* (*Red Square at Noon*) or her "'pure' lyric poetry," as they represented a severe "threat to the prevailing political order."²²⁵ Scammell did not see any point in simply presenting Gorbanevskaya as a political writer and activist, as he believed there was no difference whatsoever "between Gorbanevskaya the activist and Gorbanevskaya the poet."²²⁶

Scammell regarded it his task to publish testimonies and appeals as well as poetry and chapters from uncensored novels. All of these writings convey the literary creativity inside the 'Other Europe,' of which the West had limited knowledge. *Cahier de l'Est*, too, was engaged in reintroducing new forms of Eastern literature into the West. In its 1975 editorial the journal called for a new approach to 'Other European' literature. The editors reminded the reader of the times when the Eastern parts of Europe played a major role in Europe's artistic evolution, where "a large number of initiators of avant-garde movements came from."²²⁷ The writings' non-conformity was not only reflected in the writers' disobedience towards Soviet literary standards but also in their ability to confront the Western reader with something that did not fit the image of the mediocre official or highly politicized writings from the East. This non-conformist literature was used to create a new picture of the literary landscape of Europe in the mind of the Western reader, and thereby to strengthen awareness of the absurdity of Europe's cultural division.

Literary representations of experiences of state socialism carried an immediate danger for the regime. Whether in content or form, the depiction of life under communism that characterized non-conformist writings deviated from the officially disseminated image of the Soviet cultural sphere. Furthermore, as "there is human experience which cannot be depicted except in a novel," literary writings that reached the West through illegal means transferred knowledge that had yet to come to light.²²⁸ Pavel Litvinov believed that a mutual influence between the East and the West was the ideal outcome of such literary exchanges. Although

²²⁵ The Russian version appeared in 1970 with Possev in Frankfurt, and in 1970 with Holt in New York.

²²⁶ Scammell, "Notebook," 12.

²²⁷ "Editorial," *Cahiers de l'Est. Revue Trimestrielle*, no.1 (January 1975): 1. Translated by the author.

²²⁸ Kundera, "Comedy is Everywhere," 5–6.

the Russian human rights movement was dependent on Western public opinion, Litvinov outlined the possible contribution of Russian experiences to the advancement of knowledge in the West:

[w]e know that without the support of Western public opinion our movement could never exist and we are always grateful for this support. Meanwhile, we hope that our experience may be of help to the people of the free world. That is why we want to bring our experience to those who have not had it, by reminding them of the bitter truths that violence cannot achieve anything good, that there are no simple and universal means of solving all problems, that something can be achieved only on the basis of tolerance and compassion, that it is useless to divide people and the world on the basis of politics, and that extremism of any sort, no matter what noble purpose it is meant to achieve, is dangerous for any society.²²⁹

Underground writers now addressed world opinion. When the Western attitude changed from a highly individual interest into a system of values shared by a growing number of people, in particular, a debate emerged about the referentiality of the West and about publicity in the region.

A letter written by political prisoners from the Russian Gulag Camp Perm 36 offers a provocative insight into these Western concepts. The letter was read aloud and then debated during a conference organized by *Kontinent* in 1978, which dealt with the question of "personal responsibility as a common problem of East and West." The prisoners appealed to the West to finally take responsibility for the implementation of universal rights: "[t]he West faces a choice which it cannot avoid and which will determine for a long time not only the political but also the moral authority in Europe and the world. How valuable are freedom and rights for those who take these goods for granted?"²³⁰ Freedom granted to only one part of Europe endangered the security of the continent as a whole. "Has the West come to realize the necessity to defend common rights as the only guarantee to secure the further existence of this world, which today has moved closer together?" they asked.²³¹ In the letter the

²²⁹ Litvinov, "The Human Rights Movement," 15.

²³⁰ Letter by political prisoners from the camp 36 in Perm, read aloud at the "Kontinent Podiumsdiskussion," 232. Translation by the author.

²³¹ Ibid.

West becomes an imagined entity thought to be capable of ending the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and freeing its people. Alexander Pjatigorski, a Russian émigré philosopher, denounced the distorted and unbalanced relationship between existing dissidents in the East and imagined public opinion in the West. He appreciated those “courageous people in the Soviet camps and prisons” who dared to sign letters with their names “for which they pay with their years, their blood and even with their life.” He ridiculed their belief “in an abstraction such as ‘the West’ and ‘the Western people,’” however. The unfair nature of this unbalanced relationship between individuals and “something faceless” could never result in a symmetrical encounter.²³² Pjatigorski acknowledged the gap between the individual prisoners and the letter’s addressee, a theoretical authority. Vladimir Bukovsky agreed with Pjatigorski but pointed out that in the case of imprisonment the lack of personal contacts could lead to a theoretical conception of the West:

I feel most intimately connected to those people who express the “wrong” point of view. Naturally, if one is interned in a camp, it seems difficult to formulate what the West is. The West is some kind of amorphous substance which provides us with technology and loans. But if you pose the concrete question to them: Tell me, West, for what do you take responsibility? Then you get the answer: for nothing. To the Soviet man the West is indeed something incomprehensible. It gives but it does not demand anything. And naturally, it seems difficult for those people to understand that the West is composed of individual personalities.²³³

In a 1984 collection of essays in *Index on Censorship* entitled *They Shoot Writers, Don’t They?* Stephen Spender explains why the West had remained an anonymous entity to suppressed authors in the East for such a long time. “[T]he reader,” he writes, “living in that world of comparative freedom which is misnamed ‘the West,’ may be tempted to feel that all this has nothing to do with him. These writers and their works, he may think, belong to some order of humanity different from that which he inhabits. For him to read their work is a kind of spiritual or literary

²³² Pjatigorski, cited in “Kontinent Podiumsdiskussion,” 236.

²³³ Bukowski, cited in *ibid.*, 253–54.

slumming.”²³⁴ Spender's comment reflects the difficulties that went hand in hand with the cultural division of Europe, in particular, with the danger of forgetting Europe's 'other' half.

Aware of the widespread disinterest of the West's general public, non-conformist authors addressed themselves to its literary and intellectual circles. In an article in a 1977 issue of *Index on Censorship* Milan Kundera insists on the fact that not being published in one's own country, but rather through illegal means abroad, forced writers to address a world audience instead of a national readership. As a result, they needed to render specific individual experiences determined by the political and cultural situation of their countries in such a way that they could be understood outside their places of origin. By referencing Goethe's proclamation of “the end of national literature and the birth of a world literature” Kundera emphasizes his conviction that any kind of literature solely aimed “at a national readership” was “an anachronism” in itself, failing to fulfill literature's basic function. It was meaningless for literature to depict human situations in such a way that it would be impossible to understand “beyond the frontiers of any single country.” Such literature would severely incapacitate readers of that country by preventing them from “looking further than their own backyard,” forcing them into a “straitjacket of parochialism.” Therefore, he appreciated the cruel but useful lesson of not having one's work published domestically, as in those times one should “consider a book that is unable to become part of the world's literature to be non-existent.”²³⁵

Despite its tragic origin, Kundera argued, the destiny of the non-conformist writer to publish abroad contributed, often unintentionally, to the exchange of knowledge and experiences between East and West. The opportunity to gain an international readership by publishing abroad allowed the writer to make a contribution to world literature. As a result of experiencing the specific historical situation of the division of Europe, non-conformist writers from the 'Other Europe' were morally obligated to tell the West their story: “[t]he importance of this art [lies] in the fact that, on the strength of social and human experience of a kind people over here cannot even imagine, it offers new testimony about the human condition.”²³⁶

²³⁴ Spender, “Note,” 17.

²³⁵ Kundera, “Comedy is Everywhere,” 4.

²³⁶ Ibid.

This specific historical experience shone through these writings and slowly influenced the Western perspective. What united the various literary émigrés was the wish “to bear witness before the court of world opinion, to bear witness of our unprecedented experience in existing under the conditions imposed by a totalitarian society.”²³⁷ Most of the journals were of the opinion that it was necessary to document the situation at home. *Kontinent* perceived itself above all as a “journal of witness!” independent of the fact that the court of public opinion might be “deaf and dumb, either of those, who do not wish or are unable to hear us.” Nevertheless, this would affect “neither the value nor the relevance for coming generations of the witness we bear.”²³⁸ The Western confrontation with these experiences offered the possibility of a recreation of a pan-European sphere embodied in literature. Ludvík Vaculík stressed the importance of those publishers in the West who cared about the rather unpopular literature from the ‘Other Europe’: “[i]n a larger sense this unusual and systematic activity of our hospitable publishers is important in that a Czech author can contribute to the creation of a unified European consciousness in spite of all obstacles. This, of course, is in harmony with today’s call for security and cooperation in Europe.”²³⁹

Andrei Sakharov, on the other hand, doubted the possibility of a mutual understanding between East and West to the extent that “the reality of these countries represents a historical phenomenon, which can hardly be understood in the West.”²⁴⁰ Kundera disagreed, claiming that without an understanding of the historical reality of Eastern Europe, Western Europe would fail to understand Europe in its entirety:

[i]t is this very part of Europe which over the past fifty years has become a kind of crucible, in which history has carried out incredible experiments, both with individuals and with nations. And the fact that those living in Western Europe have only very simplified notions, have never taken the trouble properly to

²³⁷ “Correspondence Maximov Vladimir,” F83/2.2, Sheet 12, George Bailey Collection. Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Bremen, Historical Archive.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Vaculík, “I Can’t Complain,” 48.

²⁴⁰ Sacharov, “Geleitwort,” 7. Translated by the author.

study what is going on a few hundred kilometers from their own tranquil homes can, I repeat, be fatal to them.²⁴¹

By perceiving historical events in other parts of Europe to be of no concern to them, West Europeans destroyed the project of a common Europe in utero:

the drama unfolding in Prague is not of the *local* order [...] but reflects with focused intensity the *European* fate. Now playing in Prague is the great tragedy of European illusions and erring ways; the possible ruin of Europe is anticipated in Prague [...] He [the Czech] sees "Europe die" every day, with his own eyes, and he is compelled, every day, to defend the "Europe" in himself.²⁴²

If the West had no interest in what was happening 'over there,' then the human experiences of Eastern Europe would be left out of a European consciousness in so far as it concerned "ideas and experiences which Russians and East Europeans gained in extremely inhuman situations, situations, to which nobody in the West had been exposed."²⁴³ The transfer of literary writings thus offered the Western reader access to a world of experiences that marked those specific parts of Europe isolated behind the Iron Curtain, and that were to a high degree unknown in the West. The Romanian émigré Eugène Ionescu, who emigrated long before the installation of state socialism in his homeland, formulated this opportunity for the Western reader as follows:

as for the rest of us—I have in mind those of us who are open to your message—who have lived in freedom and ease while you were continually dying and coming back to life, only to die again, we have neither your experience nor your authority. Who knows, had we been in your shoes, whether or not we would have yielded to fear and pain and the temptation to live in comfort and safety in your country which so handsomely pays people who are ready to serve the régime. It is you who should enlighten us, only you can still do this.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Kundera, "Comedy is Everywhere," 4.

²⁴² Kundera, "Candide Had To Be Destroyed," 259.

²⁴³ Conquest, "Kontinent und der Westen," 3–4. Translation by the author.

²⁴⁴ Ionescu, "Some Words of Welcome," 13.

Here, we can sense the new openness with which certain intellectuals in the West welcomed the writings of their Eastern colleagues. For Western European intellectuals it was not decisive whether a manuscript originated from Central or Eastern Europe. It was the 'Other Europe,'²⁴⁵ which was meant to be discovered through innovative literary exchange. As the experience of living under state socialism was no longer confined to a national context, autonomous writers from Central and Eastern Europe were, in the Western perception, subsumed under the same banner. Due to the common historical reality of state socialism, the individual writer was considered a representative voice from those parts of Europe. It is against this background that Maximov and Solzhenitsyn formulated their journal's aims. "For the first time in history," they wrote, "a situation has arisen, when in all the countries of 'victorious socialism' from China to Cuba, where at last 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' have triumphed, any imaginative literature that comes into conflict with the ideological directives of the ruling apparatus is prosecuted as a criminal offence."²⁴⁶ Solzhenitsyn hoped to create a forum for all those writers who were neither published nor read in their home countries. He stressed their historical uniqueness:

[*Kontinent*] may become a genuine voice of Eastern Europe aimed at those Western ears which have not been blocked off from the truth and want to hear it. Only forty years ago, it would have been inconceivable that Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Rumanian, German, and Lithuanian writers might have a similar life experience, draw similar bitter conclusions from it, and have almost identical desires for the future. Today, this miracle, for which we have had to pay so dearly, has come to pass. The intelligentsia of Eastern Europe speaks in a single voice of suffering and knowledge. May great honor come to *Kontinent* if it can express this voice effectively.²⁴⁷

Through their common experiences, the intelligentsia of the 'Other Europe' developed into a "community of destiny" that dared to take advan-

²⁴⁵ Miłosz, "L'autre Europe et nous."

²⁴⁶ "Statement from the Editors," 7.

²⁴⁷ Solzhenitsyn, "Some Words of Welcome," 9.

tage of the emerging opportunity to speak out loud with "the fused voice of suffering and knowledge."²⁴⁸

Contemplating the impact of this literature on Western audiences, Kundera reasoned that the literary input from the other parts of Europe was crucial in so far as it stimulated and challenged the Western literary scene: "[i]t is, of course, possibly true to say that the novel in Western Europe no longer provides many new insights and that for those we have to look to the other part of Europe and to Latin America."²⁴⁹ To the extent that "Russian writers, scientists, historians, and poets [have become] witnesses of the truth," uncensored literature offered Western audiences an insight into the historical reality of Eastern Europe.²⁵⁰ There was only one problem: the rather low interest of publishers in such Western capitals as Paris or New York to turn their attention to writers whose names they could not even spell. In a letter to Liehm from 1995 Kundera remembers his astonishment at the appearance of *Lettre Internationale* in Paris: "[i]n the centre of this egocentric Paris, the entire cultural Europe, Europe of the West but also of the East, as one called it in that era, suddenly appeared on the pages of your *Lettre*."²⁵¹

Similarly, *Cahiers de l'Est* hoped to animate an honest interest in writers from the East, instead of evoking the widespread pity or protective superiority with which the West had until then looked down upon their Eastern colleagues.²⁵² In 1976, Robert C. Porter, a literary critic and scholar, articulated his hopes for a literary future, explaining that the Western reader had to understand that these writings were not just representations of literary developments in Eastern Europe but in Europe in general: "[t]he literary process in Russia says a great deal about the literary process anywhere," he stated, giving, as it does, "insights into the philosophical traditions of Europe as a whole, while putting Russian thinking past and present in context."²⁵³

One could not separate literature according to the logic of the Iron Curtain. The forgotten literature of the East needed to be reintegrated into the broader European framework: "[i]n this context Russian and East European writings can again be perceived as part of world literature.

²⁴⁸ McKane, "A New Voice," 89.

²⁴⁹ Kundera, "Comedy is Everywhere," 5–6.

²⁵⁰ Conquest, "Kontinent und der Westen," 3–4. Translation by the author.

²⁵¹ "Lettre de Milan Kundera à Antonín Liehm," 17. Translation by the author.

²⁵² Tsepeneag, "Editorial," 1.

²⁵³ Porter, "Thinking Differently," 88.

This, however, does not simply mean that Western thinking has entered this literature.”²⁵⁴ Writers from the ‘Other Europe’ whose works had reached the West not only made a contribution to the region from which they emerged, but also to those places where they were read. Through his writings in *Kontinent* the Russian writer Vladimir Voinovich was not only instrumental in his national cultural sphere but also represented a literary alternative in Europe as a whole. According to Porter, Voinovich offered “a valuable new contribution to his native literature and European literature as a whole. Voinovich is not just the alternative voice of Russia, he is, like the best of his colleagues in East or West, the alternative voice of Europe.”²⁵⁵ Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine has interpreted the specific historical situation at the time as the basis for the creation of a common European conscience: “[t]he feeling of partaking in a community of destiny with the countries of the ‘Other Europe,’” she notes, “which in 1987 Edgar Morin greeted as a witness of the emergence of a ‘new European conscience,’ is likewise affirmably regarded by the anti-ideology movement, which marks the period.”²⁵⁶ Thus, a rapprochement became possible through the simultaneous appearance of a coherent literary voice from the ‘Other Europe’ and through emerging Western interest in the destabilization of Europe’s cultural division. Literature, or rather the flow of writings between East and West, served to realize what had theoretically been agreed upon in the Helsinki Accords.

A crucial argument in the journals’ editorial statements and the expectations of Western intellectuals was the idea of recreating a united literary body of European writers. Against the backdrop of understanding literature as the artistic expression of experience, the increased literary transfers between both sides of Europe influenced the European conscience on two levels. Journals such as *Kontinent* attempted above all to reconnect *samizdat* and exiled writers through their literature. Gorbanevskaya acknowledged the slow but successful attempt to reestablish a Russian literary canon that was no longer divided into ‘inside’ and ‘outside’:

[n]ow there is no gap like there was, say, in the thirties and forties, and even I think up to the last decades, the gap between the best Russian literature in Russia and the best Russian lit-

²⁵⁴ Conquest, “Kontinent und der Westen,” 3–4. Translated by the author.

²⁵⁵ Porter, “Thinking Differently,” 88.

²⁵⁶ Laignel-Lavastine, “L’autre Europe et nous,” 120. Translated by the author.

erature in the emigration—a readership gap. There now exists in emigration an entire Russian literature, which is indissolubly linked with what is being done in *samizdat*, with what is being written in Russia but published in the West. There is no gap; there is a certain unity.²⁵⁷

Despite circumstantial differences, Gorbanevskaya perceived the attempts to write uncensored in the underground or abroad as stemming from the same approach to literature: “[g]enerally speaking a new common literature is being created, common because developing in accordance with the same laws in the emigration and in Russia [...] I don’t feel there is an abyss between what I wrote there [Paris] and what I write here.”²⁵⁸ The ideological gap that persisted between writers inside the country and those writing in exile slowly began to disappear. On the pages of *Kontinent* a dialogue between émigré writers and underground authors was also made possible. Besides this, publishing unknown, unusual writers from the ‘Other Europe’ in a Western journal created a new literary map of Europe. The wish to recreate a pan-European literary canon that stood against the existing political division of Europe figured as many journals’ central motivating force.

In 1975, Tsepeneag formulated the ultimate dream of the future for his literary journal *Cahiers de l’Est*: “[i]f we were no longer published: that would mean that all those writers would be read, appreciated, judged according to the same criteria as the writers of any other country, that there were no longer the literature of the East and the other literature.”²⁵⁹ In a similar fashion, *L’Autre Europe* hoped to create a new European literary landscape on its pages.²⁶⁰ This mental literary map no longer dismissed the ‘Other Europe,’ and the estrangement of the separated cultures of Europe was slowly deconstructed: “[t]he future of Europe also takes place—and certain people say primarily in the towns and cities with names that appear so foreign. However, it is not a world ‘elsewhere,’ an ‘Other Europe,’ it is our world and our Europe.”²⁶¹ The journal was aware that despite its attempts to reintroduce unknown writers from the

²⁵⁷ Gorbanevskaya, “Writing for *Samizdat*,” 36.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ “Editorial,” *Cahiers de l’Est*, 1. Translated from French by the author.

²⁶⁰ For a discussion on the literary character of Europe, see the conclusion by Dethurens, “La Littérature au mouvoir de l’Europe.”

²⁶¹ Bartosek, “Editorial: La vie est belle.” Translated by the author.

East, the 'Other Europe' still seemed like a foreign planet: "[b]ut if it (the 'Other Europe') shares with us the same European culture (and nothing proves that it has left this culture), it is no less the image, in the eyes of opinion, of a far-off planet."²⁶²

Lettre Internationale also presented its own picture of a new Europe that could initially only realize itself through its literature. Without knowing the literature of the 'Other Europe,' *Lettre* argued, a European unity could never be achieved. The journal opened its pages to all European writers and thereby intended to subvert the division of Europe inside its readers' minds: "[w]hen we speak of Europe, we clearly take into account this cultural entity which has been constituted throughout millennia and upon which weigh" the "current political divisions [...]" We thus speak of Europe 'from the Atlantic to the Urals.'"²⁶³ The Eastern European author Predag Matvéievitch believed that the journal's main aim was "to establish and to deepen the contacts between Europe and the 'Other Europe' that refuses to be another Europe."²⁶⁴ *Lettre* became a "place of meeting and an instrument of dialogue" for writers from the East, since it offered them an opportunity to publish their works and to gain inspiration from "the texts of numerous Western authors, which were difficult to access or prohibited in our country."²⁶⁵ As concerning *L'Alternative*, its editorial statement from November 1979 shows that its aim, like *Lettre*'s, was to create an alternative journal in the French journal landscape by giving a voice to those countries that were often dismissed in other journals.²⁶⁶ Instead of repeating Cold War vocabulary, *L'Alternative* saw its main editorial aim in serving as a "platform of dialogue." This dialogue was imagined to take place between individuals and groups "isolated in the East," who could find "a moment of confrontation and convergence" on the journal's pages, and those in the West who were "still sensitive to the voices, the struggle, and the repression" of their colleagues in the 'Other Europe.'²⁶⁷ With its ambition of giving "the anonymous masses the opportunity to be listened to," *L'Alternative* intended to integrate voices from the 'Other Europe' into the discursive

²⁶² *L'Autre Europe*, no.1 (1984): back cover. Translated by the author.

²⁶³ "A nos lecteurs," 94. Translation by the author.

²⁶⁴ Matvéievitch, "Une perte irréparable," 21. Translation by the author.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. Translated by the author.

²⁶⁶ "Déclaration des fondateurs de la revue *L'Alternative*," 1.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

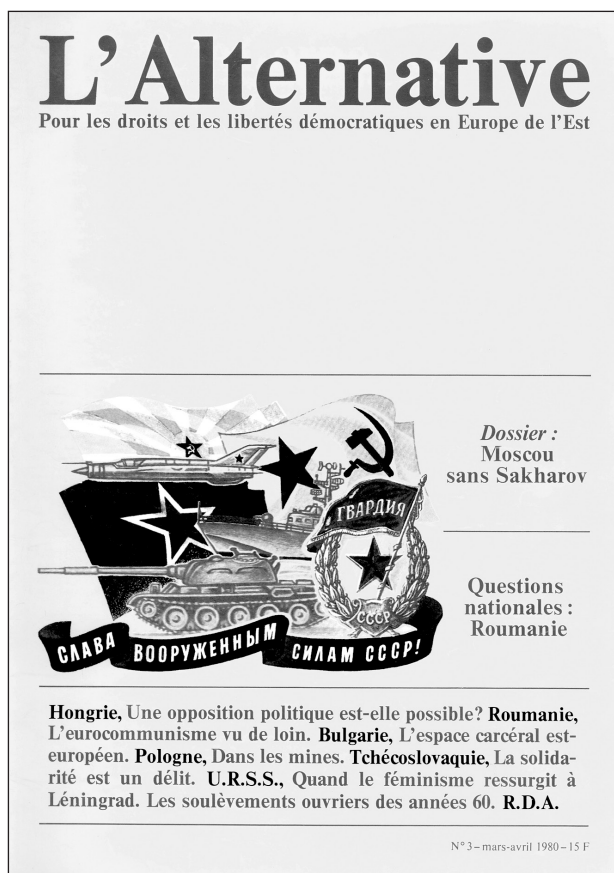


Figure 49: Cover of the third issue of *L'Alternative: Pour les droits et les libertés démocratiques en Europe de l'Est*. No. 3, 1980. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

forum of Western intellectuals. The journal's subtitle "Journal for the democratic rights and liberties in Eastern Europe" and the objectives of its 1987 successor *La Nouvelle Alternative* show that it addressed both parts of Europe.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ The French subtitle was "Revue pour les droits et les libertés démocratiques en Europe de l'Est." Translation from French by author.



Figure 50: Cover of the first issue of *La Nouvelle Alternative: Revue pour les droits et les libertés démocratiques en Europe de l'Est*. No. 1, April 1986. Library Collection, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

The 'Other Europe' slowly reentered Western discourses and reimagined the European continent through its literature. *Kontinent* summarized this aim as giving "the continent of Europe a corporate intellectual identity, [creating] a 'continent' out of a healthy exchange of first-rate ideas in opposition to the smithereens of former communities and fragments of a once organic, living culture, which now make up the body and the soul of the Gulag Archipelago."²⁶⁹ Instead of repeating the

²⁶⁹ Porter, "Thinking Differently," 88.

political and literary division of Europe, a continental image of a literary landscape dominated these journals and stood against the idea of a cultural Iron Curtain. Their conviction and engagement to prove that the cross-border circulation of texts throughout Europe was possible helped the transfer of knowledge and culture. A literary Europe, according to which the continent could be recreated through its literature, counteracted the Iron Curtain's political reality.

And even if these debates only circulated in *L'Autre Europe*, or in émigré journals such as *Aneks*, the small literary journals represented a diverse compendium of knowledge that was widely debated among its authors and reader. Leaving aside the difficult question of the quantity of publications, the literary and political debates on these journals' pages laid the foundation for recreating an influential space for transnational discourses and literature.

ENVISIONING EUROPE

The journals' engagement in recreating a European literary canon independent of the existing political division of Europe climaxed in a prominent intellectual debate that still shows its traces on today's conceptions of a 'Center of Europe.' Many writers dedicated their essays and articles, which appeared in the series of Western journals just presented, to the idea of 'Central Europe'. The body of literature reaching the West engaged Western thinkers to discuss the question of the closeness of Eastern and Western literatures. Similarly, debates about the future of Central Europe caused them to reflect upon questions of identity and cultural belonging. As opposed to the widespread understanding that this was a purely Central European debate, sources show that while Central European underground writers, above all émigrés, began the debate, it was later joined by intellectuals in the West. The debate thus developed into a cross-border project on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The all-embracing practical, as well theoretical, participation of Western intellectuals in the discourse convinced me to perceive the Central European debate as one not undertaken only by non-conformist authors from the 'Other Europe,' but as a debate that reached across the Iron Curtain.

The original debate was a purely intellectual discourse promulgated among a group of intellectuals, and as such it can be perceived as a societal prism of intellectual non-conformist culture from the 'Other

Europe' with responses to it in the West.²⁷⁰ As Timothy Garton Ash has rightly argued: "Europe was divided between those in the West who had Europe and those in the East who believed in Europe."²⁷¹ Thus, intellectuals behind the Iron Curtain were the ones who started the debate and began imagining Europe as well as Central Europe. The debate's starting point was Kundera's explosive article "Un occident kidnappé ou la tragédie de l'Europe centrale."²⁷² Appearing in 1983 in *Le Debat*, it was soon followed by György Konrád's *Antipolitics* and Adam Michnik's "Letters from the Gdansk Prison."²⁷³ These articles emerged out of the émigré experience and in various ways approached the concept of Central Europe. Kundera defined Central Europe as consisting of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.²⁷⁴ With Michnik, he posed questions about the problems of a Central European identity, and looked towards the revalidation of the pluralistic aspirations that united Central Europe not simply in terms of an imposed Soviet system but also as a common culture. Yet, their quest for such a vague entity contradicted historical reality. Their main question focused on whether there was a real (meaning not imposed) supranational identity in the region, and if so, who belonged to it. Since a definable Central Europe did not exist, writers such as Kundera felt free to postulate a utopian one.

In this context, a new strategy of opposition against the Soviet system developed. The debate was a symbolic answer to the political situation in the 'Other Europe,' fostering a discussion about the political and cultural existence of a region one could define as Central Europe. The authors used this newly created discursive sphere to deconstruct

²⁷⁰ In contrast to Poland, the *samizdat* movement in Hungary was not a workers' movement. Gábor Demszky argued in 1988 that "il faut bien comprendre qu'il ne s'agit pas du 'peuple,' mais des étudiants, des professeurs, de la classe moyenne de Budapest seulement." In "Un éditeur de *samizdat*: Nous intéressons plus," 6.

²⁷¹ Garton Ash, interview by Harry Kreisler.

²⁷² Kundera, "Un Occident kidnappé ou la tragédie de l'Europe centrale." The *New York Review of Books* initiated widespread interest in this article, which was published in two versions a year later, entitled "A Kidnapped West or a Culture Bows Out," *Granta* 11, 1984, and "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *New York Review of Books*, April 26, 1984.

²⁷³ Konrád, *Antipolitics* and "Is the Dream of Central Europe Still Alive?"; and Michnik, "Letter from the Gdansk Prison." Other important articles are Miłosz, "Looking for a Centre" and "Central European Attitudes."

²⁷⁴ Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," 34.

the Soviet monopoly on the mentality and behavior of its citizens. Some of their essay titles reflect the highly practical character of the debate, which is sometimes referred to as the "Projet Europe Centrale" [Central European Project]. As Karel Bartosek formulated it, this project was intended to "research the causes which have led to the current political and existential climate in the center of Europe."²⁷⁵

The Central European countries had not come very far in their attempts to liberate themselves from Soviet power. The Hungarians tried it in 1956, the Czechs and Slovaks in 1968, and the Poles in 1980–81.²⁷⁶ As such, the idea of 'Central Europe' was conceived of as being a supra-national project. Konrád imagined the joint engagement as follows: "[n]ational routes to liberation have failed, let us therefore try the international, all-European one."²⁷⁷ Konrád invited all Central Europeans to undertake this oppositional strategy, an image that implied the unambiguous Europeanness of those countries that had fallen under Soviet domination and which had been subsumed under the label 'Eastern Europe.'²⁷⁸ Konrád imagined that this new tactic could return independence and a sense of identity to his native region.²⁷⁹ Sándor Radnóti argued that through this debate the region could create a balance between the opposed political European systems: "I believed in Central Europe in this sense, as a neutralization. If we cannot be [a] member of the West and cannot be a democratic and civic state, we need to cleverly define a special status for ourselves. A neutrality. Central Europe meant this. It had a compensatory function."²⁸⁰ The idea of Central Europe destabilized the officially propagated mental entity of the Soviet Union and the dichotomous division of Europe. The aim was independence from the Soviet regime and a "return to diversity,"²⁸¹ proposing "a way out of Soviet-type homogenization in emphasizing the European qualities."²⁸² It expressed a new hope according to which Soviet uniformity would be replaced by cultural variety. This was seen as the core

²⁷⁵ Bartosek, "La Renaissance de l'Europe Centrale?" 4.

²⁷⁶ Garton Ash, "Does Central Europe Exist?" 50.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 45.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 50.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 45.

²⁸⁰ Radnóti, interview by the author.

²⁸¹ See Rothschild, *Return to Diversity*.

²⁸² Schöpflin, "Central Europe: Definitions Old and New," 27.

quality of the new concept of Central Europe,²⁸³ employed to deconstruct Soviet influence on the mentality of the “poisoned village”²⁸⁴ or the “countries that come out of the cold.”²⁸⁵ The utopian mental map of Central Europe was designed to counteract the actual mental map of Eastern Europe and to reintegrate Central Europe into the heart of the continent.

In Central Europe’s process of analyzing its own legitimacy the attempt to define not only a geographical but, more importantly, a cultural ‘European center’ played an important role. Apart from discussing the future of Central Europe, it is, as Rafal Grupinski stated, “the center of Europe which is questioned.”²⁸⁶ Kundera, too, defined Central Europe as “the part of Europe situated geographically in the center.”²⁸⁷ The idea of Central Europe was directed towards a recreation of a pan-European community no longer divided into East and West. The debate about its identity was shaped by the attempt to measure Central Europe by European criteria, and can be seen as an authentic expression of the unrestrained drive towards the West.

When discussing the former, present, and future identity of Central Europe, many writers used dichotomous images of Russia versus the West. As such, both East and West played a major role in Central Europe’s allocation of values. Since the region was deeply shaped by its geographical, political, and cultural location, caught between Russian and Western culture, the East-West dichotomy was predominant in the Central European debate and serves as a key to understanding the concept of Central Europe. In the words of Konrád: “[i]t’s here in East Central Europe that Eastern and Western cultures collide; it’s here that they intermingle [...] Neither Westerners nor Russians, we Middle Europeans.”²⁸⁸ Some Central European authors tried to prove the existence of a deep-rooted cultural difference between Russia and Central Europe. Kundera, for instance, argued that after World War II Central Europe, which “always had been a part of the West, historically as well

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Rejer, “Le village empoisonné,” 64–65. Translation from French by author.

²⁸⁵ Roy, “Ces pays qui viennent du froid,” 15–17. Translation from French by author.

²⁸⁶ Grupinski, “Le centre de l’Europe est en question,” 14–17.

²⁸⁷ Kundera, “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” 33.

²⁸⁸ Konrád, “The East: Three Reports,” 49.

as culturally,"²⁸⁹ was subjected to a "'Russianization'—the pressure to conform to being Russian." He posed the rhetorical question: "[h]ow could Central Europe not be horrified facing a Russia founded on the opposite principle: the smallest variety within the greatest space?" In Kundera's understanding Central Europe was "the West—a West that [had been] kidnapped, displaced, and brainwashed" by Russia.²⁹⁰ Here, the question is whether the use of this negative image of Russia simply referred to the Soviet Union as a political system, or whether it recalled the immutable character of "eternal Russia."²⁹¹ When Russia attacked Hungary, Kundera argued, they "were attacking Europe itself."²⁹² European civilization was "under siege by the Soviet barbarians."²⁹³ The "otherness" of "evil Russia" was often played up in order to create a Central European identity.

Kundera referred to "the idea of Europe" and to those values that marked Europe's identity and history. "Europe" represented not "a phenomenon of geography but a spiritual notion synonymous with the word 'West.'"²⁹⁴ When "the Russians occupied Czechoslovakia they did everything possible to destroy Czech culture. This destruction [...] put a violent end to the modern era, the era in which culture still represented the realization of supreme values."²⁹⁵ Due to cultural and political "Russification," it had become "in the eyes of its beloved Europe" just a "part of the Soviet empire and nothing more, nothing more. [...] By virtue of its political system, Central Europe is the East."²⁹⁶ In other words, Russia had succeeded in severing Central Europe from its European past. Kundera deliberately ignored the different connotations of "Soviet" and "Russian": "but am I being too absolute in contrasting Russia and Western civilization?"²⁹⁷

In his essay entitled "An Introduction to a Variation" from January 1985 Kundera accused the Russians of having ended his literary career: "[w]hen in 1968 the Russians occupied my small country, all my books were banned and I suddenly lost all legal means of earning a living."²⁹⁸

²⁸⁹ Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," 33.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Neumann, *Uses of the Other*, 151.

²⁹² Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," 33.

²⁹³ Neumann, *Uses of the Other*, 103.

²⁹⁴ Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," 33.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 37.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁹⁸ Kundera, "Introduction to a Variation."

The Russians brought an end not only to his individual career, but also to Western culture: “[f]aced with the eternity of the Russian night, I had experienced in Prague the violent end of Western culture such as it was conceived at the dawn of the modern age, based on the individual and his reason, on pluralism of thought and on tolerance. In a small Western country I experienced the end of the West. That was the grand farewell.”²⁹⁹ In his response entitled “Why Milan Kundera is Wrong about Dostoevsky” Joseph Brodsky vehemently opposed Kundera’s image of Russia and his claim of European superiority over Russian culture. Brodsky reformulated Kundera’s argument in order to show that it was not Russian but Soviet culture that had subjugated Czechoslovakia. He argued that the sorrows brought upon the Czech people in general, and on Kundera in particular, were—as in the case of Dostoevsky—to be overcome by the “privilege of free man” and not just by “Western culture”:

[t]he Russian night that has descended on Czechoslovakia is no darker than it was when Jan Masaryk was thrown through a window by the agents of the Soviet Secret Service in 1948. It’s Western culture that helped Mr. Kundera to survive that night, it’s in that night he came to love Denis Diderot and Lawrence Sterne and to laugh their laughter. That laughter, however, was the privilege of free men, as were the sorrows of Dostoevsky.³⁰⁰

Brodsky accused Kundera of having fallen victim to repeating the dangerous dichotomous division of Europe into an “East-West divide.” “[H] is notion of European civilization is somewhat limited or lopsided,” he wrote, “since Dostoevsky doesn’t fit into it and is identified with the threat to it. The other thing, of course, is the paradox of the Eastern victim’s assumption of cultural superiority over the Western villain, which nonetheless doesn’t deter him from aspiring to the benefits of the villain’s system.” Brodsky criticized Kundera and “the people of the Continent” for defining their identity only by means of cultural and mental borders, and always in view of their own cultural inclusion into the European sphere. “Mr. Kundera is a Continental, a European man,” Brodsky said. However, “these people are seldom capable of seeing them-

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Brodsky, “Why Milan Kundera is Wrong about Dostoevsky.”

selves from the outside. If they do, it's invariably within the context of Europe, for Europe offers them a scale against which their importance is detectable."³⁰¹ He pointed out that Kundera's concept of Central Europe only held firm in relation to Europe and its culture as opposed to the culture of Russia:

[h]aving lived for so long in Eastern Europe (Western Asia to some), it is only natural that Mr. Kundera should want to be more European than the Europeans themselves. Apart from anything else, this posture must have considerable appeal for him because it endows his past with more logical links to the present than are normally available to an exile. It also places him at a good vantage point from which to chide the West for betraying its own values (what used to be called European civilization) and for surrendering certain countries that have tried to persevere in that civilization against terrifying odds.³⁰²

The Russian thinker Tatiana Tolstaya also vehemently opposed this very Kunderian approach to Russian culture, which was widespread among Central European thinkers during the late 1980s. At a conference in Lisbon in 1989 she confronted the inherently anti-Russian character of Kundera's concept of Central Europe. "The stubbornness with which everybody talks about Central Europe," she argued, "as if it were a special place which somehow unifies you, and I've even felt an apologetic sense as though it is bad to be an Eastern European, that it is somehow worse than being a Western European. I even heard the expression 'a truly Western writer.' Does that mean that the closer you get to the East, the less likely you are to be a full-fledged writer?"³⁰³ Konrád commented on the senselessness of recreating the Cold War dichotomy between Russia and the United States in this intellectual debate:

[t]he East-West dichotomy makes it clearly impossible to be clear-sighted in today's world; it draws in and swallows up good minds and mutually stupefies the world's peoples. [...] The East-West dichotomy doesn't depict the world realistically; it

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Tolstaya, cited in "The Lisbon Conference on Literature," 93.

works ideologically, to justify the bipolar Holy Alliance of the Cold War.³⁰⁴

Konrád concluded that it did not make much sense to exclude Russia from the map of Europe in order to give Central Europe a special place. By creating Russian alterity, Central Europe would not be able to escape the grasp of the Soviet state. Only by proposing a greater geographical and cultural frame incorporating the Central and Eastern parts of Europe simultaneously, Konrád believed, could one propose an adequate concept of a future Europe:

[i]f Budapest, Bratislava, Prague, Cracow, Warsaw, and Berlin belong to Europe, then why not Leningrad, why not Moscow—indeed, why stop before Vladivostok? It is all part of Eurasia, there is no state frontier between. It is possible to think on a Eurasian scale, too. This is a more fitting perspective for the next millennium than that of little Western Europe, from where the life I live here seems an alien mythology. I would like to think of myself as some utopian son of Europe [...] I have the Russians to thank for my life; of all the literatures of the world, that of Russia has affected me the most.³⁰⁵

Neither Konrád nor Kundera perceived Western Europe in its limited Cold War understanding. In a highly anti-Western mode, Kundera condemned Western Europe for its ignorance about “the vital significance of the central lands for the survival of Europe as a whole.”³⁰⁶ As a consequence of the Iron Curtain’s ongoing cultural and political division of Europe, Western Europe had come to understand the continent as merely meaning the West: “Europe hasn’t noticed the disappearance of its cultural home because Europe no longer perceives its unity as a cultural unity.”³⁰⁷ Kundera concluded that the “real tragedy for Central Europe, then, is not Russia but Europe: this Europe that represented a value so great the director of the Hungarian News Agency was ready to die for it.” But he “did not suspect that [...] in Europe itself Europe

³⁰⁴ Konrád, *Antipolitics*, 34.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 128–29.

³⁰⁶ Judt, “The Rediscovery of Central Europe,” 31.

³⁰⁷ Kundera, “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” 35.

was no longer experienced as a value.”³⁰⁸ Here, Kundera referred to the developments that took place after the Yalta Conference in February 1945, after which President Roosevelt was blamed for having ‘sold out’ Central Europe to the Soviet Union. The tragedy of Europe, he believed, was the fact that “Western Europe had lost a part of itself—namely, Central Europe.”³⁰⁹

Central Europe, which was seen as the prospective cultural center of the continent, was meant to re-inspire the lost values of the European continent. Kundera continued: “Central Europe longed to be a condensed version of Europe itself in all its cultural variety, a small arch-European Europe, a reduced model of Europe made up of nations conceived according to one rule: the greatest variety within the smallest space.”³¹⁰ This quote—in the same way that Kundera argued that Central Europe crystallized itself—represents a distilled version of all the aspirations connected to the Central European utopia. Thinkers such as Kundera set out to challenge the European characteristics of Central Europe by arguing that, though the region was different from Western Europe, it was part of the European mainstream. The concept of Central Europe as it was used in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary was meant to create distance from the Soviet system, to stress the inherent difference between Central and Eastern Europe, and to testify in the West.³¹¹ In 1989, Danilo Kiš formulated his point of view on the original *aim* of the debate. Although of Serbian origin, Kiš utilized the concept of Central Europe without any hesitation, as if it had been made for the entire Eastern European region including South Eastern Europe:

[o]ur principal aim was to develop a strategy whereby we would be recognized as individuals from the point of view of Europe, in the eyes of other Europeans. We existed here and there before this word “Central Europe” came into vogue; writers like Czesław Miłosz, Joseph Brodsky, and Josef Škvorecký established individual identities and became recognized. They helped give the rest of us an identity, so that we could be seen as individuals in the eyes of Western Europe.³¹²

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 38.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 35.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 33.

³¹¹ Hradec, “La valeur d’un témoignage,” 22–23.

³¹² Kiš, cited in “The Lisbon Conference on Literature,” 89.

The individualization of the countries and cultures of Central Europe could be realized, Kiš argued, not only by discussing the cultural construction of the region, but especially through the contributions of exceptionally good writers. Only individual thinkers, he said, could guarantee the region's diversification.

After originating among underground writers and émigrés in the late 1970s, the Central European debate entered Western literary journals in the mid-1980s and immediately aroused immense popularity in Western intellectual circles. One could easily speak of a Central Europe mania raging among Europeans intent on re-centering the marginal European countries. The reason why such a large number of prominent thinkers not only engaged in supporting the publication opportunities of underground writers in the West, but also in debating their literary and philosophical merits, must be found in their belief in the connect-edness of both parts of Europe. However, I am convinced that had his-torical ties to the 'Other Europe' been absent, Western intellectuals would not have engaged so enthusiastically in debating its future. Due to their own partial belonging to or historical origination in those parts of Europe, Western intellectuals actively argued for a new construction of a European center.

Barbara Epstein reveals an intimate view of her own leaning towards Central Europe. She strongly differentiates between her experiences in Czechoslovakia and Russia, mentioning that she had read the great Russian novelists and visited Russia several times. She remembers that it was an amazing experience to say "I am in Moscow," but she felt that Russia was somehow different.³¹³ The magnitude of Moscow as an "amazing" city, as well as of Russian culture itself intimidated Epstein. This contrasted markedly with her first visit to Prague: "[t]hat was quite different to being in Czechoslovakia at that time. I was there many times but that one time was very moving to me. And of course then I kept up with publishing, we published a lot of Havel before and since."³¹⁴ Epstein's personal and moving experiences in Prague fostered to a large degree the *NYRB*'s central focus on publishing Central European authors.

The popularity of the Central European debate among both Eastern and Western intellectuals raises questions about the explicit and implicit

³¹³ Epstein, interview by the author.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

ideas it formulated. To engage thinkers in a common debate it sufficed to pose the question "Does Central Europe exist?" or differently formulated, "What makes Central Europe central in Europe?" These questions drew participants into an imagined community, motivating intellectuals to rethink the meaning of Europe and the possibilities of recreating a European unity against the dichotomous concepts of Eastern Europe versus Western Europe. The question of Europe was important to underground writers, émigrés, and Western thinkers who considered Europe's future unity as a cultural necessity. Yet, the debate about Central Europe was not restricted to paper. Various conferences were dedicated to the topic. In June 1987, the conference entitled *Mitteuropa: Une idée pour ou contre L'Europe* took place in Paris,³¹⁵ as well as, in the same year, a workshop at the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Present in Paris called *Europe centrale: problèmes de définition*,³¹⁶ and a conference entitled *Heritage menacé de l'Europe centrale* in Thun, Switzerland.³¹⁷

While the definition of Central Europe was limited to the four Visegrad countries—Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary—and was determined by the origins of the participating authors, in the broader discussion we discover a new definition of the term. *La Nouvelle Alternative*, for instance, declared that:

this debate was not "inspired by one or several (two or three) intellectuals," although the Moravian émigré Milan Kundera or György Konrád from Budapest have considerably contributed, by evoking numerous critiques, to the broadening and advancement of the debate. This debate was, in its beginnings, not "une affaire d'émigrés" although, in its evolution, some emigrations, the Czech in particular, have played an important role.³¹⁸

First, the concept of 'Central Europe' had long been debated in the German-speaking world. Second, the debate did not solely consist of articles by non-conformist writers and émigrés, because many intellectuals in Eastern and Western Europe responded to these texts. Taking this wider

³¹⁵ The conference "Mitteleuropa, une idée pour ou contre l'Europe" was organized by the L'Institut Goethe, Institut autrichien et B.I.L.D, June 10, 1987.

³¹⁶ Documented in *La Nouvelle Alternative*, no. 8 (December 1987): 27–53.

³¹⁷ Reprinted in *Cadmos*, no. 23–24 (Autumn–Winter 1983).

³¹⁸ Bartosek, "La Renaissance de l'Europe Centrale," 4. Translation by the author.

range of additional articles into account, it appears that there was a far broader and less restrictive debate about Central Europe at the time.³¹⁹

The thematic issue on “The Rebirth of Central Europe?” published in 1987 by *La Nouvelle Alternative* represents this wider understanding of the Central European region, and as such offers a ground for a theoretical discussion on what parts belong to Europe as a whole.³²⁰ Although it addressed Central Europe, the issue’s focus lay not on the typical Central European countries,³²¹ but on reconnecting the debate to wider conceptions of Europe. This far more diverse discussion about Central Europe embraced more than sixty articles dealing with various aspects of the debate. In the issue a pan-European image of Central Europe emerges. The titles of many of the articles exhibit a close discursive linkage between the debate about Central Europe on the one hand, and the question about the future of a European identity on the other. Central Europe is an unfixed concept. The titles prove how undefined the concept and the understanding of the various parts of Europe were. The process of classifying what holds Europe together culturally is still ongoing, mirrored in the paradigmatic title of an essay by Jan Triska: “East Europe? West Europe? Both? Neither.”³²² Other formulations such as “L’Occident, l’autre Europe, les Europes, l’Europe?” (The West, the Other Europe, Europes, Europe?) or “Ni Est ni Ouest” (Neither East nor West) reveal that at the end of the 1980s the region’s search for its own identity and its Europeanness was still ongoing.³²³ By stressing the term Europe within the Central European idea, it becomes clear that the concept of Europe represents the starting point for new claims connected to the rediscovery of Central Europe. Czesław Miłosz referred to his home country, Poland, as “notre Europe” and “starting from my

³¹⁹ Articles appeared in journals such as *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *Esprit*, *Cahiers de l’Est*, *Temps Modernes*, *Quadrant*, *L’Alternative*, *La Nouvelle Alternative*, *L’Autre Europe*, *Le Débat*, *Encounter*, *Partisan Review*, *Index on Censorship*, the *New York Review of Books*, *Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture*, *Dissent*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Granta*, *London Review of Books*, *Lettre Internationale*, *East European Reporter* and *Salisbury Review*. The time frame of the journals analyzed includes the years 1964–1990.

³²⁰ “La Renaissance de l’Europe Centrale?” special issue of *La Nouvelle Alternative*, no. 8 (December 1987).

³²¹ The four Visegrad countries.

³²² Triska, “East Europe? West Europe? Both? Neither?”

³²³ Pavlowitch, “L’Occident, l’autre Europe, les Europes, l’Europe”; Massel, “Ni Est ni Ouest,” 41.

Europe.” As such, he deployed the continent to describe his European heritage. Indeed, Europe was the object of debate.³²⁴

This broader debate on Central Europe was shared by various other Central European writers,³²⁵ by thinkers from Yugoslavia and Russia³²⁶ as well as by Western intellectuals from the United States,³²⁷ the German-speaking countries,³²⁸ Britain and France.³²⁹ The thinkers that engaged in the debate overlap to a large extent with those who were involved in the social practice of literary transfers across the Iron Curtain. The activists from behind the Iron Curtain who were part of the opposition³³⁰ refused to give up, and felt the urge to become active.³³¹ In this context the voices of such émigrés as Milan Kundera or Karel Bartosek were especially authoritative. They formulated an émigré perspective on the question of the Europeanness of Central Europe and on the dangers of a Westernization of Europe as a whole. The fact that underground authors such as Michnik and Konrád, émigrés including Kundera or Bartosek as well as Western novelists and journalists such as Roth and Garton Ash joined this intellectual enterprise reflects the discursive intermingling of Eastern and Western intellectuals. In particular, the French intellectual scene served as a motor for generating the debate. Geographers, historians, university professors, and politicians had long debated Central Europe's geographical and cultural space. The interest in the ‘Other Europe’ had not just emerged out of the university context; nor was it purely scientific. Instead, it can best be understood against the background of the traditionally close ties between Central Europe as a geographical space of emigration and France as a country of immigration.³³²

³²⁴ Miłosz, “Sur notre Europe”; Miłosz, “Starting from my Europe.”

³²⁵ Karel Bartosek, Endre Bojtár, Rafal Grupinski, Ferenc Fehér, Ágnes Heller, Joseph K., Sándor Radnóti, Radomir Luza, Michaela Massel, Jan Patocka, Ákos Puskás, Jacques Rupnik, Jan F. Triska, and Mihály Vajda.

³²⁶ Stevan Pavlowitch, Danilo Kiš.

³²⁷ Roth, “Comment j’ai découvert l’autre Europe”; Garton Ash, “Does Central Europe Exist?”; Rugg, “Eastern Europe”; Mellor, “Russia and Europe.”

³²⁸ Asperger, “L’Europe centrale est-elle un système inerte en repos?”; Pollak, “Regard de Vienne.”

³²⁹ Françoise Bauret, Michel Deguy, Pierre George, E. Manint, Antoine Marès, Michel Prigent, Jean-Pierre Rageau, and Violette Rey.

³³⁰ Bartosek, “La Renaissance de l’Europe Centrale?” 4.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid., 5.

In the Western context it appears that the terms Central Europe and Eastern Europe were often used interchangeably.³³³ Liberation from Soviet power and a revalidation of the cultural diversity of Central Europe was an overall goal.³³⁴ In his famous article “Does Central Europe Exist?”³³⁵ Timothy Garton Ash argues that it was “East Europe in acta, Central Europe in potentia,” referring to the opportunity to differentiate anew between the various entities of the entire European continent.³³⁶ Garton Ash further claims that the debate was successful if it changed the mental geography of Europe in the minds of the Western reader. “If it merely reminds an American or British newspaper reader that East Berlin, Prague, and Budapest are not quite in the same position as Kiev or Vladivostok—that Siberia does not begin at Checkpoint Charlie—then it serves a good purpose,”³³⁷ helping gradually transform Western indifference into an increased awareness of the complexities of Central Europe.

Furthermore, he contends that the idea of Central Europe could break the “single dichotomy of East and West” which had been created by the post-Yalta order and had been accepted by Western Europe.³³⁸ However, the concept of Central Europe proposed by Kundera implied the danger of a new dichotomy. Many Western thinkers appreciated the concept but heatedly argued against this propagandistic division of Europe. Michael Scammell outlined his understanding of a new map of Europe that included Russia:

[w]hile I recognize the concept of Central Europe as being anti-Soviet in its inspiration, many of us [...] spend a lot of our time trying to emphasize that Russia and Russian literature is also a part of that same Europe. So, while there may be a political sense to outlining Central Europe, Russian literature and Russian culture is the same as our culture and therefore should not be pushed aside.³³⁹

³³³ Ibid., 4.

³³⁴ Konrád, “La stratégie serpentine de la libération de l’Europe de l’Est,” 34.

³³⁵ Garton Ash, “Does Central Europe Exist?” 45–52.

³³⁶ Ibid., 52.

³³⁷ Ibid., 45.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Scammell, cited in “The Lisbon Conference on Literature,” 122.

It is revealing that Scammell speaks of "our culture" when referring to the Central European concept. It implies that he perceived the debate as not merely Central European but European. During this same discussion Susan Sontag expressed her sympathy with Russian dissatisfaction about the dichotomist character of the debate: "I think I do understand why the Russian writers aren't sympathetic to this concept, including, a bit to my surprise, Joseph Brodsky."³⁴⁰ But, as she explained, the concept was mainly aimed at the Western reader and intellectual:

[i]t is true: it is a concept invented for the West, for consumption by Western intellectuals. It is, if you will, an anti-Soviet concept. It was an attempt to teach Western intellectuals [...] that the countries in the Soviet bloc were not simply cultural appendages of the Soviet Union, that they had a culture which preceded the presence [...] of Soviet influence; that they were part of a grand European tradition; and that there is not just something called "Eastern Europe." [...] I mean, the whole point is the contrast with the notion of the "East" [...] that Eastern Europe was not always "Soviet Union, plus" [...] It was a lesson for Western intellectuals to give them a somewhat larger and more sophisticated idea of cultural geography [...] It has improved the political and cultural understanding of the Western-educated public.³⁴¹

The French thinker Alain Finkielkraut posited a similar idea, arguing in an editorial of *Le Messager Européen* that "the reintroduction of the forgotten concept of Central Europe has literally opened our eyes and we now know that the other Europe is not a different Europe, but the place in which the European spirit is in danger of obliteration."³⁴² This demonstrates that Western intellectuals perceived the concept of Central Europe as a means to inspire the utopia of a united Europe.

The discursive reinvention of Central Europe offered various ways of imagining an entangled future for both parts of Europe after an end to the Cold War. In so far as the journals that published non-conformist literature from the 'Other Europe' hoped to create a new literary conti-

³⁴⁰ Sontag, cited in "The Lisbon Conference on Literature," 119.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Cited in Laignel-Lavastine, "L'autre Europe et nous," 124. Translated by the author.

nent, the discourse itself was a way to imagine a common cross-border identity. In contrast to the anti-Soviet Central European concept proposed by Kundera, the larger debate shared by thinkers in both East and West went beyond national discourses and perspectives. It resembled the utopian appeal of a transnational structure, centered on the consensual notion of overcoming the cultural division of Europe that took place according to the mental map of the Cold War. The utopian nature of the Central European idea guaranteed its discursive success. In this way, the debate followed the thesis put forward by the German historians Martin Schulze Wessel and Jörg Requate, according to which “the appeal to a European” or in our case Central European public “is based on a fiction but one which can have a far-reaching communicative meaning and can thereby be very successful.”³⁴³ In so far as a group of people appealing to a certain idea always occupies a partial public space in society, even in the underground, the joint utopian appeal for Central Europe served as a pan-European discursive sphere.³⁴⁴ Schulze Wessel and Requate analyze the political and societal situation out of which actors in general utilize utopian notions, something they believe served as a way out of a seemingly hopeless situation. They contend that “such groups mostly made use of appeals which were relatively powerless in the official environment and who had for that reason either no or only very limited access to their own, state-controlled media.”³⁴⁵ For these marginalized groups appealing to a European or Central European public offered an alternative way of publicizing their specific interests.³⁴⁶ This theory might help to better understand how Central European underground writers and émigrés used the term originally.

Besides the marginalized position of the non-conformist thinkers in their own regions, Central Europe itself belonged to the margins of Europe. In the appeal for a re-emergence of Central Europe, Central Europeans exposed their marginal political and social situation and pleaded for the reintegration of their region into Europe. The appeal for Europe has historically come from its peripheries.³⁴⁷ In the case of the Central European debate Central Europeans initiated the debate in

³⁴³ Requate and Schulze Wessel, “Europäische Öffentlichkeit,” 14. Translation by the author.

³⁴⁴ The term was coined by John Downing in *Radical Media*.

³⁴⁵ Requate and Schulze Wessel, “Europäische Öffentlichkeit,” 14.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

order to put an end to their region's exclusion. The debate's visibility in the West strengthened the creation of a public "space in which to discuss Central Europe. It was a first glimpse of free articulation in a Western context."³⁴⁸ While focalized through West European metropolitan centers, appeals to an idea of Europe addressed world audiences.³⁴⁹ Pleading for a Central Europe in Western capitals such as Paris and New York, followed the same logic as appeals to the European idea.

The transfer of the Central European appeal from underground writers in the European periphery to public intellectuals in the West reflects a twofold distancing process from the margins to the center. The Central European debate did not represent a one-dimensional communicative path from East to West but developed into a reciprocal exchange instead. This was mainly due to the fact that the appeal was employed not only by the politically and socially marginalized East, but was also actively supported, debated, and utilized in the West. The discourse about a new conception of Europe had become a segment of societal interest beyond the borders of Central Europe.³⁵⁰ Although the debate was initiated by Central Europeans, in the West of the late 1980s it encountered a situation of awareness about the necessity of new communicative channels.

But this new engagement in a common debate over the future of (Central) Europe did not just reflect an altruistic intellectual commitment. Tony Judt, who himself had actively promoted the cause of persecuted writers, evaluated the Western rediscovery of Central Europe in 1990 critically: "what we are seeing here," he observed, "is once again a projection of a Western radical vision onto an imaginary Central European landscape. [...] The dissidents in the region, eagerly sought out by Western theorists as interlocutors and as living evidence of the plausibility of their own projects, are also something of a projection."³⁵¹ Instead of representing a purely selfless act, the Western interest in writers from the 'Other Europe' served as means "to renew and recast cultural and political debates at home, in Paris and New York, con-

³⁴⁸ Jessie Labov, "Balkan Revision to the Myth of Central Europe," at The Socrates Kokkalis Graduate Student Workshop: New Approaches to South-east Europe, presented at the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, February 12, 1999: 1.

³⁴⁹ Requate and Schulze Wessel, "Europäische Öffentlichkeit," 14.

³⁵⁰ Compare Beyrau, "Die befreiende Tat des Wortes," 36.

³⁵¹ Judt, "The Rediscovery of Central Europe," 39.

ducting a kind of domestic housecleaning with imported equipment.”³⁵² Still, debates like this, which spread across the Iron Curtain like bush-fire, were successful cultural instruments. They animated this reemerging transnational community of letters with debates that were of universal and not just of national or ideological relevance. In this way, *tamizdat*’s contribution exemplified the flow and exchange of ideas about the cultural outlook of post-Cold War Europe.

³⁵² Ibid.

EPILOGUE

Beyond the Literary Cold War

More than twenty years have passed since the revolutions of 1989 turned the Iron Curtain into a Cold War relic. Today, travel companies promote Iron Curtain bike tours, offering “sustainable tourism of the former death strip” and promising its participants will get “as close as possible to the former border,” even “frequently crossing” it.¹ Before 1989 such promises would have sounded suicidal. Living at and with the Cold War border evoked many fears amongst the locals. The Iron Curtain succeeded in physically preventing people from leaving the Eastern Bloc and from seeking a new life in the West. But when it came to books, the unhindered flow of literature leaked through its supposedly hermetic seal. Western travelers, ambassadors, and correspondents smuggled manuscripts in and out, allowing non-conformist literature from the ‘Other Europe’ to permeate the Iron Curtain and be published in the West. *Tamizdat* called into question the very existence of this Cold War border.

Wolfgang Eichwede has pointed to *samizdat*’s ambivalent nature, which indeed “belong[ed] to the époque of the divided Europe” but nonetheless “connected the continent like no other event.”² *Tamizdat*’s existence also ironically depended on the Iron Curtain. Yet, *Written Here, Published There* has reconstructed how *tamizdat* both connected the Eastern parts of Europe and stretched across the Iron Curtain and

¹ “The Iron Curtain Trail: A Model for Sustainable Tourism in Europe.”

² Eichwede, “Archipel *Samizdat*,” 18.

the Atlantic. *Tamizdat* possessed the ability to integrate individuals in the East and the West into a common intellectual project with its own practices and debates. Although I am cautious of describing what emerged from *tamizdat* as a concrete “public sphere,”³ most of the *tamizdat* texts found what they had been looking for in the West, namely, publicity and readership.

A major aim of the present book has been to identify *tamizdat*’s abilities to create a transnational literary community with its attendant social practices, debates, and discourses, challenging the assumption that *tamizdat* was just a publishing endeavor. The study of *tamizdat* serves to identify the dynamics of literary transfer and personal cross-border relationships between Eastern and Western actors during what we might want to call a Cold War of literature. It involved local intellectual communities on both sides of the Iron Curtain: inside the Soviet sphere communities of non-conformist writers, typists, and printers; and in the Western sphere communities of émigrés, engaged intellectuals, and human rights activists. Though mostly limited to intellectual elites, the intelligentsia’s singular involvement allowed physical and material interactions to develop into intellectual debates that transcended borders. This study, then, illuminates a transnational community-building process that enabled *tamizdat* to develop into a historical phenomenon, providing a model for Europe’s post-1989 literary culture. For this reason alone *tamizdat* is worth remembering.

Apart from furthering the cause of writers under dictatorship, the interest in establishing an uncensored space of literary exchanges was a driving motive of Western intellectuals. *Tamizdat*’s ‘scandalous’ character long played an important part in the Western receptiveness to this kind of literature. But a change towards focusing on its literary quality gradually occurred. Sally Laird argues that the fact that these writings came “to the West primarily by way of political scandal” created a distorted picture of the literary underground in the West.⁴ The clandestine, illegal, and secretive methods used by such writers as Solzhenitsyn became well known in Western intellectual circles. In this context Robert Kaiser argues that

[t]he American press loves scandal or, to put it more respectfully, the American press loves irony. There was something

³ See Kusin, “Challenge to Normalcy,” 28.

⁴ Laird, *Voices of Russian Literature*, xiii.

rightly ironic, apart from everything else, when Solzhenitsyn was writing his books in Russia under the noses of the very people whom he was ridiculing and attacking. That helped Solzhenitsyn to become famous—a “star” in our world.⁵

He contrasts the attraction of *tamizdat* with that of émigré literature, suggesting that the American press would have been less concerned with “purely émigré Russian literature” entirely divorced from the Soviet Union because it lacked sensationalism: “it is a dog biting a man; in America, it is a man biting a dog that makes news.”⁶

Tamizdat’s social practice—its illegal production and circulation—endowed it with a special charm that galvanized Western reception. By presenting the individual choices of Western scholars who were engaged with non-conformist and not simply dissident literature I have challenged the image of the West as interested primarily in literary scandals. The manifold social interactions and the pursuit of a common mission detailed here reconstruct a pan-European literature and offer a more diversified picture of literary cross-border contacts.

The critical position of non-conformist authors inside the Soviet sphere and their Western counterparts metamorphosed into a social practice of literary exchange. The circulating texts were the visible ties as well as the products of this social activity, which proved the resurgence of a new transnational morality and solidarity.⁷ Without this joint social and, above all, secretive activity, the widespread circulation and publication of uncensored manuscripts would not have existed. The need to work in secrecy and rely on conspiratorial means to produce and circulate *samizdat* and *tamizdat* was also, paradoxically, the result of the authors’ wishes to promote the freedom of expression and the free flow of information. But it was exactly this common secretive element and a trust in the righteousness of literary contact across the Iron Curtain that gave *tamizdat* its power.

Tamizdat contributed to a partial role reversal of intellectuals in Eastern and Western Europe, which enabled the reciprocity of exchanges. While many Cold War histories assume that the East wanted to be freed by the West, the literary and oral sources of *tamizdat* present a very different picture. Many Western publishers carried a heavy load of nostalgic

⁵ Kaiser, “Russian Émigré Literature,” 156.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ For the case of the Ancien Régime see Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, 17.

images of the 'Other Europe' and its writers. Not wanting to minimize the genuine interest of North American writers and intellectuals, I believe the reading and publishing of *tamizdat* texts had an important side effect. Even if detached from their place of origin and absorbed into a new cultural context, the *tamizdat* books and discourses presented here served as a connecting link to older layers of European memory. Olga Carlisle emphasizes the joint inspiration of underground and émigré literature to the Western psyche: "[i]ndeed, dissent and exile have always inspired universal metaphors about the human condition. For this reason, Western readers have taken to heart the works of such political exiles as Nabokov, Thomas Mann and Milan Kundera."⁸ Many of these publishers, who belonged to the second or third generation of Jewish émigrés from the 'Other Europe,' discovered and recovered parts of their own biographical past from the region. In promoting this literature they found a way to create a bridge between the cause of underground writers, who were taken as the new embodiment of suffering, and the slowly fading memories of their own families' pasts.

Apart from the biographical incitement to read and publish *tamizdat*, intellectual curiosity about this literature's universal human message motivated Western publishers to rescue this literature from its disappearance into the writer's desk drawer. In 1980, Milan Kundera even argued that Western thinkers explicitly focused their proverbially egocentric attention on this body of texts "not so much in order to have a thorough knowledge of them as to integrate them, like a pebble, into the mosaic of [their] own theoretical speculations."⁹ Due to its *raison d'être*, *tamizdat*—as an icon of human suffering—enabled Western intellectuals to complete their mosaic of theoretical and literary assumptions about how to live and write about Europe's major dictatorships in the twentieth century. Western intellectuals looked towards *tamizdat* in search of new literary and intellectual inspiration. The difficult political situation appeared to produce the talent thought to be lacking in the West. *Samizdat* authors, on the other hand, stressed their independence from Western public opinion. They argued that the 'real' thing was happening in the underground, disqualifying Western Europe's necessity for cultural exchange and development. This role reversal motivated the West to seek moral and literary input from the 'Other Europe,' while underground writers made

⁸ Carlisle, "Letter from Prague—Voices of a Captive City," 3.

⁹ Kundera and La Traverse, "1968: Prague, Paris, and Josef Škvorecký," 558.

use of the West's freedom of expression. Behind this stood the conviction that literary input from the 'captured' parts of Europe could enrich Europe's consciousness and literary traditions.

Going one step further, *tamizdat* could not have been realized without an overarching goal of spreading information that challenged state propaganda. *Tamizdat* represented a transnational compendium of uncensored knowledge. To keep open the literary or rather communicative gates between the two halves of Europe further allowed the transfer of experiences. Above all, the content of the books, leaflets, and poetry collections pulled people into this cross-border endeavor. The question remains, however, as to how much the "transmission of ideas occurred across the Iron Curtain."¹⁰ To what extent was the newly created literary space a realm in which transnational values and principles could be defined, shaped, and reformed? The intellectual debates initiated through *tamizdat* reveal that it served as a vehicle for the transfer of ideas across the artificial literary Iron Curtain. The notion of Central Europe, in particular, questioned the division of Europe and envisioned the state of Europe's literature after the end of the Cold War. The vision of a pan-European literary canon in a reunited Europe clashed with the 'real' existing political division of Europe's literature. In this way, *tamizdat* called into question the cultural division of Cold War Europe.

¹⁰ Major and Mitter, "East is East and West is West?," 14.

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Index

A

- Action Group for the Defense of Civil Rights, 114
- Akhmatova, Anna, 21
- Aksyonov, Vassily, 42, 156, 167, 268
- Albee, Edward, 177n407, 184–185, 312, 316, 317–319
- Alexander Herzen Foundation (Amsterdam), xiv, xv, 2, 19, 20n6, 60, 127, 168n381, 269, 273, 326, 366
and Karel van het Reve, xiv, xv, 19, 20n6, 60, 127, 269, 273
and Andrei Amalrik, xiv, 273
- Alexeyeva, Ludmilla, 47, 85
- L'Alternative (La Nouvelle Alternative)*, xvi, 372n158, 372n159, 373n161, 402–404, 415–416, 416n319
- Alternative Cultural Forum (Budapest), xv, 329, 368–369, 371
- alternative culture, 134
- alternative media, 295, 380
- alternative public sphere, 12
- L'Altra Europa*, 226
- Amalrik, Andrei, xiii, xiv, 60, 152, 247, 271–273, 295, 310–311, 359
and *Involuntary Journey to Siberia*, 310
and *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?*, xiii, 247, 271–272, 295
and Alexander Herzen Foundation, xiv, 273
- ambassadors, 15, 89, 220, 303, 305, 309, 313–314, 316, 320, 425
and literary smuggling/exchanges, 15, 220, 303, 305, 425;
Prague embassy, 310, 312–313, 316, 318, 320, 357, 358
See also Wendy Luers; William Luers; Wolfgang Scheur
- American Committee on Foreign Relations, 258, 259n165
- American Helsinki Watch, *See* Human Rights Watch
- American liberation policy, 37, 38
- Amnesty International, 136, 279, 322, 337, 337n24, 341, 344, 345n60, 346, 377; *See also* human rights
- Ancien Régime (France), 20, 144n284, 263, 427n7
parallels with *samizdat*, 20, 263

Anders, Jaroslaw, 231
Aneks, 100, 168n380, 405
 Ann Arbor, xi, 127, 128, 371
 Arche, 300
 Ardis Publishers (Ardis publishing),
 xi, 127–128, 142, 363, 372
 and Carl Proffer xi, 127, 128,
 142, 363
 and Ellendea Proffer xi, 127, 128
 Arendt, Hannah, 59, 62
 Aron, Raymond, 76, 162, 386
 Arzhak, Nikolai, 45–46
 Association of American Publishers,
 181, 360, 364
 Association des Amis de la Revue
 Continent, 385
 Ash, Timothy Garton, 141, 192,
 193, 375, 406, 418
 Atlantic Research and Publications,
 153–154, 153n326
 Avignon International Theatre Fes-
 tival, 195
L'Autre Europe, 372n159, 373n161,
 401, 405, 416n319

B

Bahro, Rudolf, 165
 Bailey, George, 385, 387
 Barańczak, Stanisław, 149, 384
 BBC, 71, 86, 116, 239, 240, 241, 279
 Belgrade, 164, 253
 Bellow, Saul, 260n169, 386
 Bernstein, Robert, 177, 181–183,
 189–190, 221, 320, 358–359,
 362–365
Beszélő, 284
biblioteke samizdata, 251
 Bieler, Manfred, 291
 Biennale del Dissenso (Venice), xii,
 2, 163–166
 Biermann, Wolf, 96, 165, 291, 296
Biuletyn Informacyjny, 100
 Boiter, Albert, 121, 241n89, 251,
 254, 268, 343–344

Böll, Heinrich, 149, 296, 296n318,
 335, 372n157, 382
 Bonner, Jelena, 74n236, 265
 book fairs, 363–366, 368
 Frankfurt Book Fair, xiv, 282,
 293, 308, 326, 363, 365–366,
 367
 Leipzig Book Fair, 364
 Moscow Book Fair, 362–364
 Moscow Book Fair Reception in
 Exile, 362, 364–365
 New York Is Book Country
 Street Fair, 364
 book transfers, 236, 364
 Bondy, Francois, 260n169, 369
 Borowski, Tadeusz, 203
 Brent, Jonathan, vii, 21, 177n407,
 185–187
 broadcasting
 See radio broadcasting; Radio
 Free Europe; Radio Liberty; Ra-
 dio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
 Brodsky, Joseph, 23, 102–104, 144,
 156, 171, 260n169, 378, 388,
 410, 413, 419
 Bukovsky, Vladimir, 46n130, 99–
 100, 192, 345, 360, 386, 394

C

Cahier de l'Est, xvi, 372n159,
 373n161, 383, 391, 392, 399,
 401, 416n319
Cahiers du Samizdat, 373n161, 380
 Camus, Albert, 123
 Carlisle, Olga, 66, 67–68, 170, 428
 Castoriadis, Cornelius, 76
 censorship
 and Alternative Cultural Forum,
 369–370
 and Biennale del Dissenso, 164
 and détente, 33
 and discrimination, 97, 102
 and emigration to the West, 142,
 144n284, 175, 192

- and Helsinki Accords, 348, 369–270, 373–375
- internal, 109, 137–138,
- legal, 109
- mental, 137–138
- “the muse of censorship,” 198, 204
- official, 11, 84–88, 125–126, 132, 132n231, 138, 164, 170, 205, 219–220, 245, 303–304, 364, 366, 390–391
- and political purges, 23
- postal, 9, 260, 284
- resistance to, 9, 11, 35, 40, 88, 98, 103, 111, 125, 170, 192, 245, 276, 284, 303–304, 348, 350, 363–364, 366, 373–375
- in the Russian Empire, 19
- and *samizdat*, 103, 113, 122, 132, 138, 205, 262–263, 276, 284
- systems of, 9, 85, 97, 125, 168, 219–220, 284
- and *tamizdat*, 103, 132, 138, 170, 175, 192, 198, 205, 245, 284, 303–304, 350, 363–364, 366, 373–375, 390–391
- and the *thaw*, 128
- and Tom Stoppard, 192
- Western perception of, 192 198, 204, 333, 363–364, 366, 373–375, 390–391
- and Western radio broadcasting, 245
- See also* Index on Censorship
- Central Europe, 15, 157, 173, 176, 178–179, 190, 232, 284, 288, 288n287, 347, 387, 405–409, 411–421
- construction of, 414
- discursive reinvention of, 419
- cross-border debates, 405–408, 411, 413–422
- and identity, 405–410, 413, 416, 420
- the idea/concept/notion of, 15, 405–408, 411–413, 415–416, 418–419, 420–421, 429
- neutrality of, 407
- opposed to Russia, 408–409, 411
- part of pan-European community, 408, 416, 420, 429
- See also* Eastern Europe
- Chalidze, Valerie, 124, 269, 344
- Charter 77 (Czechoslovakia), xv, 11, 86, 101, 106, 108, 159, 192, 275–279, 315, 354–357, 360
- and Helsinki Final Act, 11, 355
- and human rights, 11, 275, 278–279, 354–357, 360
- persecution of, 355
- transnational human rights community, 357
- Chekhov Press, 341
- Max Hayward, founder of, 341
- Edward Kline, founder of, 341
- Chojecki, Mirosław, 156n335, 162, 281–283
- Chronicle of Current Events*, xv, 57, 93, 129, 174, 339–342
- Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*, xv, 129, 221, 269, 341, 343
- CIA, 24, 29, 37, 38–39, 38n95, 169–170, 222, 248, 251, 258, 279, 309, 334
- and Congress for Cultural Freedom, 24, 38, 169, 334
- funding, 39, 169, 258
- and journals, 24, 38–39
- civil society, 79, 114–115, 356
- “uncivil society,” 11, 115
- Cold War, 5–6, 6n6, 8n19, 9–11, 10n30, 13–14, 20, 23, 27, 36–40, 44, 125, 132n231, 137, 157, 177, 189, 193, 219, 222, 234, 238, 240, 249, 255, 263, 287, 302, 309, 336, 346, 350, 383, 402, 411–412, 419–420, 422, 425–427, 429

- binary image/narrative/historigraphy of the (and its deconstruction), 6, 6n6, 13–14
 cultural Cold War, 13, 37–38, 177
 culture, 5–6, 238, 383
 and censorship, 11, 132n231, 263
 “cold-warriors,” 346, 381
 and cross-border contact, 5–6, 219, 222, 249, 287, 425–426
 lessons/legacy of the, 425–429
 literary Cold War/Cold War of literature, 27, 425, 426
 politics, 10, 44, 346
 and the radio, 219, 222, 238, 240, 249
 Communism, 34, 41, 48, 75, 77–78, 84, 94, 111–112, 140, 176, 179, 186, 189, 194, 228–229, 309, 345, 348, 372, 381, 392
 anti-communist/communism, 30, 38, 39, 40, 143, 228–229, 230, 232, 236, 280, 372, 380–381
 eurocommunism, 78–79
 “goulash communism,” 110
 community of letters, 59, 105, 422
 conferences, 2, 86, 151, 161–162, 168, 227, 253, 368–369, 384, 415
 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), 164, 347
 Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), 24, 38, 169, 334
 Conquest, Robert, 121, 387
 cultural diplomacy, 15, 301, 304, 309, 309n370, 311, 315
 copyright/copyright violations, 126, 131–132, 291–292
 international copyright convention, 132, 181
 Council for a Free Czechoslovakia, 258
 cultural translation, 159, 254, 298, 380
 Czechoslovak Documentation Center for Independent Literature, Scheinfeld, xiv, 131, 274, 274n216, 308, 323, 324, 325
 Czechoslovakia
 American embassy in Prague, 304, 310, 312–313, 315–318, 320, 357, 358
 Arthur Miller on, 196
 Barbara Epstein on, 414
 censorship in, 21, 122, 143
 and Charter 77, 11, 86, 101, 106, 108, 159, 192, 275–279, 315, 351, 354–357, 360
 Czechoslovak Documentation Center for Independent Literature, 131, 274, 307
 Czechoslovak Theater Institute, 317
 dissidents in, 85, 110, 161, 177, 288, 295
 Edward Albee in Prague, 312, 317–319
 emigration from, 156, 156n335, 177
 Hubert Schlegl (Weiden), 308–309
 Ivan Klíma on, 84, 180, 198, 203, 303, 313, 316
 and Jan Kavan, 275–281
 John Updike in/on, 204–208, 316–319
 Milan Kundera on, 20, 92, 103, 143, 180, 203, 207, 384, 387, 395, 406, 410, 413
 Palach Press Agency (London), 275–281
 Philip Roth on, 197–204
 and Prague Spring, 70, 98, 153, 156, 409
 and Radio Free Europe, 249, 258
 and Rosemary Kavan, 6, 122, 277–281
 samizdat in, 98, 121n185, 122, 126, 266, 274–281, 288–289, 295

Sixty-Eight Publishers, 129–131, 275, 308, 372
tamizdat from, 122, 126, 129, 139, 150, 156n335, 173, 274–281, 288–289
 Tom Stoppard in/on, 112, 191–193, 286
 transnational solidarity/connections with, 153, 161, 177, 240, 288–289
 and Vilém Prečan, 274, 307–308
 and Weidener Literaturtage, 306–309
 Western solidarity with, 40, 150, 156n335, 173, 177–178, 274–281
 William and Wendy Luers in, 304–306, 304n351, 312, 315–320, 357
 Wolfgang Scheur in Prague, 306–307

D

Daniel, Yuli, 14, 31, 45–48, 45n125, 46n127, 50–60, 62, 64–65, 67–68, 71, 74, 77, 101, 197–198, 353, 378
 Nikolai Arzhak, 45–46
 Demszky, Gábor, 106, 154, 285, 406n270
 Déry, Tibor, 144, 336–337
 committee, 337
 détente, 6, 33, 78, 256, 257–259, 349
The Diary of Anne Frank, 190–191, 191n460
 Dienstbier, Jiří, 264n182
 Di Meana, Ripa, 162–164
 and Biennale del Dissenso, 162–164
 diplomats, 11, 32, 221, 274, 295–297, 301–305, 308–310, 312–313, 317
 and smuggling, 221, 274, 295, 304–305, 313

 and non-conformist culture, 32
 and *samizdat* and *tamizdat*, 32, 221, 297, 301–305, 308–310, 312–313, 317
 diplomacy, 15, 301, 304, 309, 309n370, 311, 315, 335
 dissent, 7, 64, 78, 86, 89–91, 94, 109, 143–144, 152, 167, 204, 207, 241, 252, 289, 428
 dissidence, 6n6, 7, 12, 43n115, 64, 111, 139, 146, 294, 387
 dissidents, 11, 21, 22, 58, 78, 83, 89, 90, 104, 110, 111, 117–118, 124, 140, 144, 153, 157, 161, 166–167, 178–179, 192, 220–221, 243, 247, 275–278, 280, 303, 306, 310, 313–314, 321–322, 327, 343, 345, 356, 371, 381, 386, 388, 394, 421
 and culture, 111, 166
 and literature, 21, 104, 144, 166, 179, 278, 327, 371, 388
 dissonance, 43, 64, 119, 334
 and literature, 43, 64, 119
 dissonant voices, 23, 24, 40, 41, 43n115, 169
 distortion, 34, 47, 115, 142, 144, 245
 Djilas, Milovan, 230, 260n169, 386
 Doctorow, E. L., 316–317, 369
Doctor Zhivago, 14, 19, 23, 24–25, 27–30, 33, 38n95, 42–43, 48, 52, 64, 172, 231, 247, 264
 Nobel Prize, 28, 29
 as *samizdat*, 19
 as *tamizdat*, 172
 Drakulić, Slavenka, 118, 148
drugi obieg, 116
 Dudintsev, Vladimir
 Not by Bread Alone, 34, 151

E

East European Cultural Foundation (EECF), 172–173
 Eastern Bloc, *See* Soviet Bloc

- East Europe* (journal), 226
- Eastern Europe
- and Biennale del Dissenso, 163–167
 - biographical roots in, 200
 - books from, 233
 - censorship in, 168
 - common identity of, 101
 - Congress for Cultural Freedom and, 334
 - émigrés, emigration from, 78, 158, 162, 163, 179, 188, 191, 223, 225, 288
 - Helsinki Accords and, 347–349, 368, 379
 - Holocaust in, 193, 203
 - intellectuals/dissidents from, 9, 11, 153, 163–167, 171, 180, 346, 398
 - Jews from, 188, 191, 200
 - opposition in, 114, 346, 390
 - samizdat* and *tamizdat* in/from, 126, 140, 145, 153, 163–167, 173, 177, 179, 254, 390, 398–399
 - secret police in, 223
 - Soviet domination of, 390, 394, 396
 - western broadcasting and, 222–225, 237, 242,
 - and (Western) Europe, 173, 177, 231, 237, 242, 259, 347–349, 380–382, 398, 402, 407–408, 411–415, 418–419
 - western literature in, 122, 220
 - western media/perspective on, 80, 145, 198–199, 253, 258, 380–382, 384, 387, 295–399, 407
 - women in, 146, 148
- See also* Central Europe
- East Germany, 95–96, 165, 193, 287–300, 287n286, 302, 335, 382
- East-West (intellectual exchanges), 5, 15, 23, 143, 161–162, 178, 234, 256, 259, 320, 385, 408
- Ehrenburg, Ilya
- Thaw*, 23n21, 34, 244
- Elias, Nobert, 76
- embassies (embassy), 15, 205, 296, 301–310, 304n351, 312–318, 320, 358
- and *samizdat/tamizdat* smuggling, 301–302, 304–306, 308–309, 313–314
- émigrés and exiles
- and Ardis Publishers (Carl and Ellendea Proffer), 127–128, 142, 363, 372
 - and Biennale del Dissenso, 163–166
 - and CIA funding, 169
 - and Central European Debate, 405–422
 - community of, 73, 155, 156, 160–161, 171–172, 396
 - and Congress of PEN International, 167–168
- Czechoslovak Documentation Center (Vilém Prečan), 131, 174, 274, 308, 323, 324, 325
- as cultural translators, 77, 142, 156, 158–162, 168, 220, 239, 299, 365, 384, 397, 401
- ideological and national battles of, 15, 105, 160, 161, 175, 300, 394
- Jewish heritage of, 188, 197, 199, 203, 227, 428
- and Helsinki process, 361
- journals by, 40, 47, 69–71, 100, 126, 168–173, 372, 375, 385–386, 405
- literature by, 35, 142, 158, 427
- as literary couriers, 227, 230, 305–307
- and opposition, 51, 105, 160–162, 169, 172, 176, 417
- organizations/institutions by, 36, 47, 228
- and Palach Press Agency, 131, 170, 275–279, 285

- publishing initiatives by, 19,
45–46, 45n123, 45n125, 51, 55,
66, 73, 126–127, 169–170, 269,
362, 372
and *samizdat*, 15, 35, 121, 145,
159–160, 165, 173–174, 199,
361, 369, 428
Sixty-Eight Publishers (Zdena
Salivarová and Josef Škvorecký),
129–130, 275, 308, 372
and *tamizdat*, 10, 14–15, 33, 35,
50, 51, 66, 100, 126–127, 136,
142, 145, 155–156, 159–162,
170–174, 220, 235, 294, 362,
396, 401, 428
and Western broadcasting, 226–
229, 237, 239, 260, 244, 344
Encounter, 24, 24n24, 38–40, 169,
175, 372n159, 416n319
Enzensberger, Hans Magnus, 369
Epstein, Barbara, 176, 177n407,
178, 179, 190, 358, 414
Epstein, Helen, 190
Epstein, Jason, 176, 177n407, 183,
188, 379
Europe
Cold War, 5–6, 10, 12, 425
common European literature and
culture, 11, 12, 258, 373, 387
corporate identity of, 186, 237,
386, 392, 400, 404,
(cultural) division of, 219, 225–
227, 369, 395, 425
holocaust in, 195–197, 203
and human rights, 176, 347–348,
351, 368
idea of, 157, 383–384, 386, 392,
396–422,
idea of reuniting, 224–225, 237,
258, 386, 392, 396–422
literary canon of, 16, 401, 405,
429
(literary) contact between Eastern
and Western, 15, 220, 257–258,
373, 429
and *samizdat/tamizdat*, 20, 126,
186, 220, 373, 427
women activists from, 147
See also Central Europe; Eastern
Europe; ‘Other Europe’
European Cultural Forum, *See* Al-
ternative Cultural Forum
Exenin-Volpin, Alexander, 155
exiles, *See* émigrés and exiles
- ## F
- Fainberg, Victor, 192
Fall of Communism (1989), 5, 11,
12, 74, 104, 114–116, 280–281,
288–289, 350, 425–426
feminism, 93, 118, 149
in the Soviet Union, 118
and *samizdat*, 117, 146
transnational connections of, 149
Women and Russia, 117–118,
146–147
Filip, Ota, 388
Finkelkraut, Alain, 369, 419
Fischer, Elisabeth, 131
The Five Commandments, 149
Formations, 185, 372, 373n161
Frank, Anne,
The Diary of Anne Frank, 190–
191, 191n460
Frankfurt Book Fair, *See* book fairs
Frederikson, Stig, 73, 301
freedom of expression, 12, 51, 116,
175, 333, 335–336, 347, 350,
354, 360, 374, 378, 391, 427,
429; *See also* human rights
Free Europe Committee (FEC),
222, 225, 227–229, 235
Free Europe Press (FEP), 223,
225–226, 229–230, 234–235
free flow of literature/ideas/informa-
tion, 257, 259, 333, 348, 350, 427
The Future of Samizdat: Signifi-
cance and Prospects conference,
254–255

Fuchs, Jürgen, 297
 Fund for Free Expression, 360, 365
 Furet, François, 76

G

Galanskov, Yuri, xi, 46–47, 60, 62
 Garton Ash, Timothy, 141, 192–
 193, 368, 375, 406, 417, 418
la gauche anti-totalitaire, 76
 GDR, *See* East Germany
Gegenstimmen, 293, 298, 372n159,
 373n161, 380–381
 German-German relations, 287–300
 literary relations, 289–300
 Giedroyc, Jerzy, 45n123, 51, 156,
 156n335, 168n380, 385–386
 Ginzburg, Alexander, xi, 46–47, 60,
 62, 110, 170
 Gladkov, Alexander, 28
glasnost, 7, 120, 257–258, 297
 Glavlit, 126
 Glazkov, Nikolai, 7, 124
 Glucksmann, André, 75, 76
 Gorbachev, Mikhail, 61n186, 120, 257
 Gorbanevskaya, Natalya, 93, 153,
 246, 340, 390, 392, 400–401
Grani, 47, 69, 70, 147, 168n380,
 372n156
 Grass, Günter, 59, 296n318,
 372n157, 382
 Green, Ashbel, 177n407, 182, 358
 Greene, Graham, 59
 grey zone, 125
 Grnouski, John, 259
 Grossman, Vasily
 Life and Fate, 265
 Gruša, Jiří, 156n335, 158, 369
gosizdat, 8n20, 113
The Guardian, 180, 279, 371
 GULag (Gulag), 65, 74–75, 143,
 170, 186–187, 202, 208, 264, 393
The Gulag Archipelago, xii, xiii, 14,
 72–75, 74n235, 77, 79, 210, 215,
 246, 404

H

Haraszti, Miklós, 84, 108, 110, 133,
 137, 352–353
 Härtling, Peter, 59
 Hartz, Louis, 349
 Havel, Václav, xii, 87, 108, 145, 179,
 192, 211, 317, 354
 Memorandum, 192
 Power of the Powerless, 178
 Havemann, Robert, 165, 291
 Hayward, Max, 31, 36–37, 43–44,
 45n123, 46, 241, 256, 264, 341
 and *Doctor Zhivago* (Boris Pasternak), 31, 44, 264
 and *Hope Abandoned* (Nadezhda Mandelstam), 264
 and *Hope against Hope* (Nadezhda Mandelstam), 264
 Heeb, Fritz, 71
 Helsinki Final Act, *See* human rights
 Helsinki Accords, 7, 11, 15, 257,
 321, 333, 346, 348–352, 359–
 360, 368, 370–371, 373, 400
 and human rights, 11, 321, 333,
 346, 349–351, 360
 and the flow of literature, 333
 literary Helsinki, 351, 373
 samizdat, *tamizdat*, and, 15, 257,
 351–352
 signatories, 348, 351, 368
 Helsinki Consultations, *See* Helsinki
 Accords
 Helsinki Watch Committee, 109,
 320, 346, 351, 354, 358–360,
 368, 373
 Helsinki watch committees, 359,
 360
 Heym, Stefan, 291, 295
Hinter Dem Eisernen Vorhang, 226
 Hollander, Gayle Durham, 112,
 119, 240
 Holocaust, 47n134, 187, 194, 195–
 196, 202, 208
 Honecker, Erich, 292

Hrabal, Bohumil, 180
 Hrábková, Jiřina, 95
 human rights, 11–12, 44, 47, 51,
 57–58, 78, 121, 152–153, 162,
 167, 176–177, 183–184, 270,
 275, 278, 304–305, 311, 320–
 321, 333n1, 335, 337–339, 341,
 344–363, 375, 377–381, 383, 393
 and Charter 77, 11, 275, 355–357
 and civil society, 356
 discourses, 11, 12, 352, 383
 and dissent, 78, 152, 167
 and East-West relations, 320, 350
 groups and organizations, 44,
 162, 176, 320, 337, 351, 353,
 359
 and Helsinki Final Act, 11, 353,
 355, 363, 370
 and Helsinki process, 11, 346–
 347, 350–354, 355, 360
 Human Rights Watch (HRW),
 181, 358–359
 literary origins of, 11, 51, 58, 176,
 346, 349
 and literature, 12, 44, 176, 183–
 184, 351–353
 transnational community of, 350
 and the underground, 305, 311,
 320, 339, 341, 351, 358, 362,
 378, 380
 as writers' rights, 11, 64, 155,
 183, 321, 333, 337, 346, 350,
 353, 358, 361, 372, 378, 383
 Human Rights Watch, 181, 358–359
 Hungarian Round Table Talks (*Ker-
 ekształt-tárgyalások*) 114
 Hungary, 2, 107, 108–110, 114,
 121n185, 126, 153, 156,
 156n335, 160–161, 172, 173–
 174, 224, 229, 235, 240, 249,
 284–288, 296, 313, 335, 337,
 369, 370–371, 406, 406n270,
 409, 413, 415
 Hungarian revolution, 168n380,
 336

samizdat and *tamizdat* in, 107,
 109, 126, 173, 287, 406n270
 comparison of other Soviet
 Bloc countries with, 109–110,
 114, 126, 153, 174, 235, 287,
 406n270

I

imagined communities, 101, 105,
 110, 353, 415
Index on Censorship, xiv, xv, 2, 102,
 131n226, 149, 185, 288, 341,
 346, 372n159, 372n161, 373,
 374–375, 376, 383, 384, 390–
 391, 394–395, 416n319
 Ionesco, Eugène, 386
 intellectuals/intelligentsia
 as agents of history, 12
 and Charter 77, 108, 354–355, 357
 and the CIA, 37–38, 38n96, 40
 and civil society, 115
 contribution to the fall of com-
 munism, 115
 disillusionment with Soviet-type
 socialism, 75–78, 98, 140, 104,
 164, 185, 228
 in émigration/exile, 136, 140,
 156, 158, 161, 171, 227–229,
 232, 244, 260, 375
 in France, 75, 76, 157, 235, 417
 and gender, 116
 in the grey zone, 110, 111, 144,
 184
 and human rights, 45, 47, 51, 58,
 62, 194, 351–352, 354–357,
 376, 378, 384, 426
 intellectual life under state social-
 ism, 83, 91–92, 111, 141, 144,
 278, 389
 and Jews, 188–189, 194, 208
 New York, 10n30, 24, 176–208,
 360, 378
 non-conformist, 12, 60, 74, 85,
 88, 91, 98, 101, 107–108,

- and PEN, 360
 in Paris, 157–160
 political persecution of, 21, 47,
 51, 58, 62, 88, 91, 107, 377
 powerlessness of, 115
 public appeals/complaints/protest
 letters by, 59–60, 62, 64, 152,
 183, 354–357, 376
 publishing projects/journals of,
 24, 40, 171, 180, 183–184, 373,
 375, 386, 400, 403
 perspective, solidarity of West-
 ern, 16, 24, 40–42, 50, 58–59,
 62, 75–76, 140, 141, 150, 158,
 176–208, 227, 234, 314, 398,
 405–422
 and *samizdat/tamizdat*, 10, 12,
 16, 24, 34, 50, 76, 97, 107,
 136, 150, 156, 171, 180, 183,
 185, 188, 194, 208, 236, 267,
 321, 351–352, 426–428, 386,
 405–422, 428
 transnational community/
 network of, 9–10, 12, 15–16,
 34, 40–42, 58–59, 63, 108–109,
 149–150, 156, 176–177, 314,
 426
 transnational discourses/debates
 by, 15–16, 108, 158, 176, 352,
 405–422, 426, 428
 transnational encounters of, 166,
 311, 369
 transnational solidarity with per-
 secuted, 40–42, 47, 51, 58–59,
 62, 64, 109, 149–150, 156, 164,
 176–208, 314, 321, 351, 353,
 357, 376, 384
 and Western radio broadcasting,
 260, 242, 244, 260
See also émigrés/exiles
- Inter-Language Literary Associa-
 tion in New York, 45n123, 46,
 46n127, 168n381
- International Citizens Helsinki
 Watch Conference, 368,
- International Freedom to Publish
 Committee (IFPC), 181, 360, 361
- International Helsinki Federation
 For Human Rights (IHFHR),
 368, 370
- Irodalmi Újság*, 156, 168n380
- Iron Curtain
 Berlin Wall, 289, 292, 295, 300
 broadcasting across the, 222,
 248, 250, 259
 censorship behind the, 192, 198
 consolidation of the, 38
 communication channels across
 the, 259, 333, 352, 399
 deconstruction/dissolution of the
 Iron Curtain, 35, 384, 373, 399,
 405, 406, 412, 422, 425, 429
 division of Europe through the,
 5, 8, 11–12, 107, 161, 219, 270,
 349, 385, 412, 425
 entanglements across the, 10–12,
 163, 176, 180, 224, 228, 230,
 248, 250, 287, 333, 352, 405,
 417, 422
 Europe behind the, 7, 41, 77, 224,
 228, 300, 335
 exiles/émigrés across the, 219–
 220, 222, 229
 glasnost and the, 257
 intellectual community/network
 across the, 14, 16, 126, 146,
 149–150, 161, 176, 187, 221–
 222, 224, 228, 230, 238, 276,
 281, 287, 300, 303, 307, 321,
 333, 350, 352, 405, 426–427
 literary/cultural Iron Curtain, 1,
 12, 15, 107, 219, 270, 383, 387,
 405, 429
 as Nylon Curtain, 5, 157
 as permeable, 5–7, 9–12, 126,
 157, 161, 201, 219–221, 425,
 250, 295, 300, 307–308, 373,
 384, 425
 plea for human rights across the,
 351–353, 371, 381

prisoners/human rights violations
behind the, 338, 348, 350, 359,
362, 376, 379, 381

psychological, 157

samizdat from behind the, 141,
164, 167, 174, 180, 187, 201,
220, 222, 225, 250, 292, 307,
321, 333, 349, 352

smuggling across the, 15, 188,
201, 220–221, 234, 248,
260–263, 267, 281, 295–296,
307–308, 321

tamizdat across the, 1, 6, 9–10,
19, 122, 126, 163, 180, 222,
225, 234, 300, 349, 373, 399,
405, 417, 425, 429

writers/intellectuals beyond the,
59, 77, 107, 150, 192, 224, 287,
381, 397, 406

See also News from Behind the
Iron Curtain

J

Jahn, Roland, 297

Jannakakis, Ilios, 145

Japan, 147n296, 282,
material support of *samizdat*, 282

Jews, 11, 47n134, 91–92, 188–191,
193–197, 199–204, 208, 246,
270, 313, 428

historical continuity of, 91, 195
and the Holocaust, 47n134,

91–92, 194, 196, 208

and intellectuals, 188–189, 194,
208

family/life stories of, 188, 190,
197, 199, 203, 208

literary legacy, 200

shaping public remembrance,
194, 200, 203

shared experiences/memories,
195, 200, 203

and *samizdat*, 194, 199, 203

and *tamizdat*, 194, 202, 208, 428

journalists, 11, 138, 175, 221, 242,
248, 252, 280, 283, 296, 339, 417

journals

art, 123

Cold War, 36, 38–40, 169, 226,
235, 372n159,

and CIA funding, 24, 38–39,
169–170

cultural, 371

émigré, 45n123, 47, 69–71, 156,
159, 161, 168–169, 171–174,
274, 385, 396, 400–402, 405

financial support of, 38–39, 169,
372n157

and human rights, 121, 339, 346,
359, 360, 372–373, 372n161,
397

and the ‘Other Europe’, 400–
402, 405, 419–420

samizdat, 97n76, 114, 114n143,
123, 281, 284

Soviet, 25

and smuggling, 150, 174

tamizdat, 371–373, 380, 382–
383, 400–402, 405, 419

Western, 15, 24, 24n24, 33, 38,
40, 111, 135, 150–151, 169,
176–187, 189, 248, 259, 288,
293, 296, 307, 380, 382–383,
400–402, 419

Jovanovich, William, 177n407, 359

Judt, Tony, 177n407, 421

K

Kaiser, Robert, 301, 426

Kavan, Jan, 111, 131, 156n335,
275–281, 276n228, 350
and Palach Press Agency, 131,
275, 278–279
trial of, 280

Kavan, Rosemary, 6, 122, 140,
277–278

Kelet-Európai Figyelő (*The East Euro-
pean Observer*), 284

- Kende, Peter, 156n335, 160,
161n356, 161n357, 162,
162n360, 168n380, 171, 175, 285
- Kenedi, János, xiv, 98, 138, 153,
161, 169–170, 172, 283–285,
286, 287, 329, 389
- Kennan, George, 79, 160
- Kenney, Padraic, 94
- Koestler, Arthur, 39, 123, 387
- KGB, 25, 66–67, 73–74, 125, 154–
155, 220, 253, 271, 302, 310
- Kharkhordin, Oleg, 101
- Khronika Press (New York), 129,
136, 177n407, 252, 341–344
- Kiehl, William, 312
- Kis, János, 110, 172, 284
- Kiš, Danilo, 144, 180, 203, 369,
413–414, 417n326
- Kiselewski, Stefan, 174, 175
- Klima, Ivan, 84, 180, 198, 203,
303, 313, 316
- Kline, Edward, 129, 172, 177n407,
221, 269, 341–343, 350
- Knowlton, Winthrop, 177n407,
359, 363
- Konrád, György, 86, 105, 133, 137,
143, 166, 180, 350, 368, 370,
406–408, 411–412, 415, 417
- Kontinent*, 168, 171, 173–175,
372n157, 383, 385–386, 388–
389, 393, 396, 398, 400–401,
404
- Kopelev, Lev, 264n182, 300n334
- KOR (Workers' Defense Commit-
tee), 114–115, 354
- Kultura*, 45n123, 45n124, 45n125,
51, 74n235, 97, 156, 168n380,
172, 174, 385
- Kuroń, Jacek, 111
- Kundera, Milan, 20, 92, 103, 143,
180, 203, 207, 384, 387, 395–
396, 399, 406, 408–413, 415,
417–418, 420, 428
Central Europe, 406, 408–409,
411–413, 415, 417–418, 420
- “Comedy is Everywhere,” 387
and non-conformism, 144, 180,
207, 387–388, 395
The Unbearable Lightness of Being,
92, 207
and world literature, 395
- Kunert, Günter, 291
- Kunze, Reiner, 291, 292, 299, 300
- Kusin, Vladimir, 78
- ## L
- Labeledz, Leopold, 46, 255, 257
- Laber, Jeri, xiv, 109, 176, 177n407,
329, 351, 358, 361, 368
United States Helsinki Watch
Committee, 109
See also Human Rights Watch
- Licko, Pavel, 70
- Leipzig Book Fair, *See* book fairs
- Letters and Documents*, 244
- Le Monde*, 337, 356, 371, 384
- Le Nouvel Observateur*, 242,
416n319
- Lettre Internationale*, 165, 168n380,
177, 373n161, 383–384, 387,
399, 402, 416n319
- Lévy, Bernard-Henri, 76
- liberal culture, 185–186, 187
as democratic participation, 185
American model of, 185
- Liehm, Antonín, 123, 156n335, 165,
168n380, 200, 383, 387, 389, 399
- Lifshitz-Losev, Lev, 137
- listeners, 238, 239, 241, 246–247,
249, 251, 253, 343; *See also* radio
- Listy*, 168n380
- literary diplomacy, *See* cultural di-
plomacy
- literary exchanges, 63, 126, 268,
295, 297, 348–349, 352, 364,
371, 392, 398, 426, 427
as social practice, 268, 427
- literary underground, *See* under-
ground

Literaturnaya Gazeta, 30, 66, 71
 Litvinov, Pavel, 60–61, 74n236,
 152–153, 271, 353, 392–393
 living-room theater, 317
 Loboda, Vera, 265
 Louis, Victor, 69
 Luers, Wendy, 177n407, 305, 310,
 311, 312–314, 316, 317, 318, 319,
 320, 357, 358
 and human rights, 311, 320, 358
 and literary smuggling, 304–305,
 314
 Prague embassy, 310, 312–313,
 316, 318, 320, 357, 358
 Luers, William, 177n407, 304,
 304n351, 306, 310–312, 315–
 317, 319–320, 357
 and cultural diplomacy, 304, 311,
 315
 and literary smuggling, 304
 Prague embassy, 310, 312, 315–
 317, 320, 357

M

magnitizdat, 247, 283, 297
Magyar Füzetek, 168n380, 169,
 171–172
 Mailer, Norman, 62
 Mamonova, Tatyana,
Women and Russia, 117–118, 146
 Mandelstam, Nadezhda, 127, 131,
 264
 Mandelstam, Osip, 21, 172, 264
 Marchenko, Anatoly,
My Testimony, 131
 Marcuse, Herbert, 76, 137
 Maximov, Vladimir, 168, 168n380,
 175, 260n169, 303–304,
 372n157, 373n161, 383, 385,
 385n202, 386, 389, 398
 media, 12, 15, 61, 80, 86, 96, 138,
 140–145, 144n284, 148–149,
 155, 160, 175, 205, 222, 229,
 240, 243, 247, 262, 278, 294–

295, 297, 298, 300, 321–322,
 339, 348, 354, 374–375, 380–
 382, 387, 420
 Medvedev, Roy, 22
 Medvedev, Zhores A., 67, 170, 264,
 283, 321
 Méray, Tibor, 156
 Michnik, Adam, 106, 139, 149, 375,
 384, 406, 417
 Mihailov, Mihailo, 386
 Miller, Arthur, 59, 139, 140, 176,
 177n407, 195, 197, 208, 334–
 336, 359, 360
 and family memory, 196
I Think About You a Great Deal,
 195
 and Jewish experience, 195–196,
 208
 Miłosz, Czesław, xii, 7n16, 31n62,
 40–41, 209, 365–366, 413, 416
 Minden, George, 226
 Mitgang, Herbert, 292, 371
 Mitgang, Robert, 336
 Moscow Book Fair, *See* book fairs
 Moscow Book Fair Reception in
 Exile, 362, 364, 365
 as alternative official Moscow
 Book Fair, 362
 Moscow Helsinki Watch Commit-
 tee, 354, 359
 Mueller, Adolf, 131

N

Nagy, Imre, 336
 National Committee for a Free
 Europe (NCFE), 222–223, 224;
See also Free Europe Committee
 (FEC)
 Person-To-Person-Program, 223–
 224, 230
 Polonia Book Fund, 229–233,
 236
 networks, 51, 53, 107, 115, 221,
 294, 295, 320

- News from Behind the Iron Curtain* (NBIC), xiii, 226
- New York, 24, 28, 36, 38, 43, 46, 60, 136, 141, 148, 156, 167, 176–178, 183–184, 187–188, 192, 197, 200, 202–204, 208, 253, 269, 282, 292, 344, 357–358, 360, 364, 368, 377–378, 399, 421
- intellectuals in, 10n30, 24, 38, 156, 176–177, 183–184, 187–188, 192, 200, 203, 208, 358, 358n108, 360, 378
- émigrés in, 10n30, 203, 364
- New York Is Book Country Street Fair, *See* Moscow Book Fair Reception in Exile and book fairs
- The New York Review of Books* (NRYB), 111, 166, 170, 176–177, 183, 290, 352, 359
- The New York Times*, 60, 116, 121, 128, 164, 181, 202, 207, 219, 292, 301, 344, 349, 356, 358, 365, 371
- Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza (NOWa, Independent Publishing House), 281
- Nobel Lecture, xi, 7273, 360
- Nobel Prize for Literature, 28–29, 71–72, 220, 301, 322, 365
- Nobel Peace Prize, 193, 346, 365
- non-conformist
- activities, activism, 100, 114
 - activists, 101, 112, 376
 - culture, 165, 405
 - definition of, 7, 83n1
 - groups, 115
 - ideas, 38
 - intellectuals, 107, 158, 245
 - literature, 6–8, 24, 35, 37–40, 45, 77, 97, 127, 141, 165, 182, 202, 275, 291, 298, 291, 298, 372–373, 382, 392, 419, 425, 427
 - literary community, 104, 108, 110
 - literary life, 58, 111, 368
 - movement, 102, 108, 118, 386
 - political culture, 77
 - publishing sphere, 352
 - singers, 96
 - thinkers, thinking, 97, 140, 420
 - women, 92–97, 116–120, 146–149, 263–267
 - writers, 7, 13, 32, 38, 42, 58, 60, 64, 74–75, 77–78, 80, 85–86, 97–99, 106, 128–129, 132, 136, 139, 141, 144–145, 149, 157, 180, 187–188, 207, 243, 262, 270, 284, 286, 294, 320, 335, 341, 351, 358, 360, 378, 382, 389, 395, 405, 415, 426, 427
- Northern Route
- Nowy Mir*, 14n47, 66, 367
- Novi Sad, 286–287
- NOWa, Independent Publishing House, *See* Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza and Mirosław Chojecki
- O
- The Observer*, 57, 143, 279, 321, 337, 371
- Office for Copyright Law, 292
- official press, 31–32, 84, 114, 119, 348
- Oleszczuk, Thomas, 113
- opposition, 406–407, 417
- and broadcasting, 237–238, 245
 - and censorship, 125
 - as civil society, 114–115
 - confrontation with the state, 125, 406
 - cultural, 138, 381
 - and émigré circles, 131, 160–161, 172, 176
 - in the GDR, 287–300
 - generations of, 22, 172
 - and human rights, 108, 109
 - information channels of the, 101

- inter-oppositional solidarity, 108–109, 111, 162
- journals of the, 110, 172
- literary, 10, 108–110, 133, 303, 388, 407
- “opposition business”, 169
- political trials and, 47, 101
- samizdat* as, 44, 106–107, 109–111, 116, 125, 133, 136, 138, 161, 169, 277, 289, 297
- tamizdat* as, 137–138, 154n327,
- transnational network of, 105, 106, 108, 172, 302, 417
- Western interest in/solidarity with, 12, 78, 131, 140, 149, 310, 315, 381–382, 417
- Orlow, Yuri, 378
- Orwell, George, 39, 121, 230n42
- and *Animal Farm*, 230, 271, 295
- and 1984, xiii, 232–233
- Other Europe, 419, 421, 425, 428
- biographical ties to the, 15, 177, 179, 187, 191, 193, 197, 200, 203, 208, 414, 428
- civil society in the, 115
- concept, definition of, 7n15, 7n16, 321, 406
- disillusionment with Soviet-type communism in the, 77, 140, 381
- émigrés/émigré culture from the, 126, 155–158, 162, 164, 171–172, 176, 178, 191, 197, 386, 417
- (uncensored) literature/*samizdat* in/from the, 7, 14–16, 42, 48, 58, 77, 97, 104, 114, 119, 126, 141, 156, 159, 162, 166, 168, 173, 176–179, 182, 187, 189, 203, 205, 232, 260, 267–268, 274, 321, 334, 346, 365, 371–372, 380, 392, 396, 402, 404, 419, 425
- human rights violations/discourse and the, 40, 45, 58, 63, 207, 333–335, 346, 353, 357, 359, 383
- intellectual communities across/beyond the, 101, 105, 112, 132, 155, 171, 176, 321, 358, 382, 385, 398, 400
- journals in/from the, 168–169, 171–172,
- literary/moral inspiration from the, 48, 76, 79, 126, 159, 178, 182, 185, 207, 380, 385, 389, 392, 395, 398, 400, 405, 421, 428
- and the making of a pan-European literature, 15–16, 321, 372, 382, 387, 392, 401–405, 413, 419
- non-conformism, opposition in the, 40, 76, 77, 79, 101, 104, 119, 141, 165, 207, 260, 289
- official culture/literature in the, 97, 350, 391
- persecution in the, 45, 63, 104, 164, 185, 187, 195, 199–200, 204, 333, 391
- radio broadcasting in/back into the, 240, 260
- tamizdat* from the, 13, 15–16, 58, 76, 79, 126, 141, 149, 155, 170, 177, 260, 267–268, 274, 365, 371–372, 380, 400–401, 425, 428
- transnational network within/beyond the, 105, 112, 161, 170, 232, 268, 274, 289, 357–358, 378, 396, 425
- underground culture/movements in the, 75, 167, 140, 165, 232
- Western embassies in the, 302, 316
- Western interest in/solidarity with/fascination for the, 48, 75, 77, 126, 140, 149–150, 155, 164, 176–177, 185, 189, 193, 197, 200, 357, 378, 380, 427–428
- at Western literary/cultural events, 162–164, 166, 365

- Western media/reporting on the,
15, 80, 149–150, 176–177, 189,
365, 371, 372, 378, 380–381,
387, 392, 396
See also Writers from the Other
Europe
- Overseas Publications Interchange,
and Czesław Miłosz, 366
- Oz, Amos, 369
- P**
- Packman, Ludek, 386
- Paris, xv, 28, 38, 45n123, 71, 73,
73n233, 74n235, 97, 136, 156,
156n335, 157–158, 160, 162,
168, 175–176, 198, 230–231,
234, 253, 282, 283, 299,
305n354, 366, 369, 370–371,
373n161, 385, 399, 401, 415, 421
and émigrés, 45n123, 73, 156–
157, 160, 162, 168, 170, 176
and underground literature, 136
and YMCA-Press, 71, 73,
73n233, 74n235, 168n381
- Palach Press Agency, 131, 170, 275,
278–279, 285
and Jan Kavan, 131, 275, 278–279
and Rosemary Kavan, 278
and *samizdat* smuggling, 278–279
- Panorama* (BBC), 279
- Parry, Albert, 252–253
- Partisan Review*, 188–189, 416n319
- Pasternak, Boris, 14, 19, 21, 23–34,
37, 38n95, 42–45, 48–49, 54, 55,
64–65, 71–72, 231, 244, 247
Doctor Zhivago, 14, 19, 23–31,
33, 38n95, 42–43, 49, 64, 231,
247
- Pelikán, Jiří, 156n335, 162n358,
168n380, 347, 382
- PEN, 63, 184, 333–337, 334n4,
346, 360, 375
Arthur Miller, president of, 334–
336, 360
- Congress of PEN International
(New York 1986), 167–168
- PEN Center USA, 334
- East German, 334
- Hungary (Hungarian Writers As-
sociation), 336–337
- West German, 334
- Russian, 334
- PEN International, 167, 335–337,
347, 360
- perestroika*, 7, 61n186, 120, 316
- Pjatigorski, Alexander, 394
- Plešu, Andrei, 83
- pogroms, 155, 196
- Poland, 7n11, 40–41, 97, 108–109,
111, 114–115, 126, 136, 141,
156–157, 156n335, 161, 167,
173–174, 200, 224, 229, 231,
233–236, 240–241, 250, 259,
266–267, 281–283, 288–289,
335, 354, 365, 406n270, 413,
415–416
- political asylum, 157
- Polish-Czech Solidarity Group, xi,
105, 106
- Polish-Czech-Slovak Solidarity
(PCSS), 106
- Polish Institute (United States), 234
- Pospelovsky, Dimitry, 8n20, 22,
113, 157
- Possev (publishing house), 46, 60,
71, 74n235, 168n381, 392n225
- Possev* (journal), 168n380, 372n156
- Potel, Jean-Yves, 302–303, 306
- Prague Spring, 70, 277, 356
invasion of Czechoslovakia, 98
- Prague Embassy, 310, 312–313,
316, 318, 320, 357, 358
- Pravda*, 30, 252, 353, 354
- Prečan, Vilém, xiv, 122, 131,
156n335, 160, 274, 307–308,
323, 324
- pre-Gutenberg, 135, 261
- press freedom, 56–57, 118, 143,
173, 347

Preuves, 24, 24n24, 33, 38, 39, 169, 372n159
 prison, 9, 12, 22, 61, 75, 110, 120, 134, 142–143, 178, 186, 192, 201, 206, 243, 264, 277, 283, 296, 335, 337, 340, 345, 359, 361–362, 376, 378, 394, 393n230, 394
 imprisonment, 47, 60, 62–63, 92, 93, 97, 99, 100–101, 153, 174, 178, 191–192, 195, 201, 207, 243, 263–264, 266, 292, 333, 336–339, 344–346, 350, 354, 358–359, 377, 394
 prisoners, 58, 61, 114, 186, 206–207, 283, 297, 322, 337–339, 344–345, 349–350, 361, 376–378, 393–394, 393n230
Problems of Communism, 23n22, 24, 24n24, 24n25, 32, 38, 40, 64, 372n159
 Proffer, Carl, xi, 127–128, 142, 363;
 See also Ardis Publishers
 Proffer, Ellendea, xi, 127–128; *See also* Ardis Publishers
 propaganda, 33–34, 36–37, 49, 51, 54–57, 65, 71, 84, 99, 103, 111, 133, 143, 221–222, 228, 245, 340, 354, 429
 protests, 58–59, 90, 193, 247, 344, 377, 384
 public sphere, 12, 99, 182, 295, 297, 356, 426
 publishers
 and cross-Iron Curtain network, 10, 12–15, 50, 68, 91, 102, 220–221, 227, 269, 349, 364–365, 383
 émigré, 7n11, 45, 45n123, 54–55, 126–127, 129, 131, 134–136, 142, 156, 170, 227, 275, 365, 372, 383, 385, 396, 428
 New York, 10n30, 15, 176, 188–189, 357–358, 360
 samizdat, 107–109, 135, 169, 266, 379

state publishers in the Eastern Bloc, 25, 52, 365
 and *tamizdat*, 10, 12–15, 23, 28, 32, 48, 50, 54, 63, 68, 70, 114, 126–127, 129, 131, 134–136, 166, 186, 220–221, 227, 269, 356, 364–365, 380, 385, 396, 399, 428
 Western, 15, 23, 28, 32, 48, 50, 54–55, 63–64, 68, 70, 91, 114, 126–127, 129, 131, 134–136, 142, 166, 172, 176–177, 182–183, 186, 189, 201–202, 220–221, 227, 235, 260, 269, 274, 291–293, 305, 308–309, 338, 356, 358–365, 380, 383, 369, 399, 427–428
See also Sixty-Eight Publishers

R

Radio Free Europe (RFE), xiii, 15, 116, 133, 219, 222–223, 229, 234–238, 240–244, 241n93, 248–251, 254, 257–260, 291, 295
 Radio Liberty (RL), 15, 56, 219, 222, 229, 234–236, 238–243, 245, 247–249, 251–252, 254, 257–260, 343–344
 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 133, 236–238, 240, 249, 295
 radio broadcasting, 224, 236, 238, 240, 242, 244, 248, 260
 Cold War ether, 219
 cross-Iron Curtain, 248
 and jamming, 236, 241, 247, 250
 and *radizdat*, 221
 and *samizdat/tamizdat* practice, 238, 240, 244, 248
 shows, 244, 251
Radio Glasnost—ausser Kontrolle, 297
radizdat, 221
 Radnóti, Sándor, 91–92, 286–287, 407, 417n325

- Hid*, 287
 Új Symposion, 287
 Rajk, László (Rajk trial),
 and Szamizdat Butik, 107, 109
 Randle, Michael, 276
 Ratushinskaya, Irina, 142–143
 Reddaway, Peter, 20n6, 47, 61, 127,
 135, 256, 260n169, 269
 and Alexander Herzen Founda-
 tion, 20n6, 127
 Reve, Karel van het, xiii, xiv, 19,
 20n6, 60–61, 88, 113–114, 127,
 131, 136, 252–253, 265, 269–273
 and Alexander Herzen Founda-
 tion, xiv, xv, 19, 20n6, 60, 127,
 269, 273
 Reve, Jozina Israël van het, xv, 270,
 366
 Reve, Jozien Driessen van het, 2,
 269
 Romania, 91, 191, 204, 224, 369
 Roth, Philip, 84, 149, 176, 179–180,
 191, 195, 197–205, 208, 417
 and the Holocaust, 208
 and Jewish experience, 201, 203,
 208
 and Jewish literary legacy/history,
 197, 199–200, 208
The Prague Orgy, 197, 199
 Nathan Zuckerman as alter ego
 of, 197, 199–202, 204
 and the ‘Other Europe’, 176,
 177n407, 179–180, 191, 197,
 199–200, 203–204, 208
 and *samizdat*, 199, 203, 205
 and Sinyavsky and Daniel,
 197–198
 and Western idealism, 198
 Writers from the Other Europe
 (book series), xii, 179–180, 197,
 199
 Rupnik, Jacques, 7n16, 288, 384,
 417n325
 Russia, 19, 25, 30, 42, 50–51, 68,
 70, 79, 110, 117, 126–128, 132,
 172, 191, 226, 243, 252, 268,
 273, 301, 316, 387, 399, 400–
 401, 408–412, 414, 417–418,
 427; *See also* USSR
 Russian institutes, 36
- ## S
- St. Exupéry, Antoine de, 123
 Sakharov, Andrei, 57, 74n236, 83,
 164, 181–182, 221, 265, 269–
 271, 360, 365, 365n135, 378,
 385n202, 388, 396
 Nobel Lecture of, 360
 Salivarova, Zdena, 129, 275, 308
 Sanders, Ivan, 166
samizdat (self-publishing)
 aesthetics of *tamizdat* and, xiii,
 22, 107, 119, 121–124, 129,
 134–135, 205, 212–215, 380
 archipel, 106
 archival collection of, 238, 240,
 251, 253, 377
 authors, 7, 85, 131, 152, 156
 biblioteke samizdata, 251
 biography and, 90–91, 97n76,
 98–100, 194
 and CIA funding, 39, 169–170
 circulation, dissemination of, 7,
 9, 12, 15, 21–23, 70, 108, 112–
 113, 117, 119, 121–122, 124, 126,
 135, 138, 172–173, 199, 220,
 238, 241, 243, 245, 247, 253,
 255, 260–264, 266–268, 270–
 271, 276, 305, 353, 356, 427
 conferences/exhibitions/research
 on, 89n31, 120–121, 165–167,
 252–254
 copyright, 126, 131–132
 community inside the Soviet
 Bloc, 270, 281, 372
 corpus of, 13, 114–115, 122–123,
 125, 279, 290, 340
 couriers, courier routes, 15, 107,
 260, 276, 305

- in Czechoslovakia, 85, 122, 126, 131, 266, 276–277, 279, 281, 289–290, 307
- definition of *samizdat*, 7–8, 8n19, 23, 121–123
- diplomacies and, 313, 316
- early forms of, 21, 32, 44
- and émigrés/émigré culture, 156, 159–160, 165, 172–173, 244, 276, 400–401
- end of the terror and, 21, 32
- entangled history of *tamizdat* and, 2, 7–9, 12, 15, 21–22, 32, 78, 87, 109, 113, 121–122, 126, 129, 136–138, 152, 156, 305
- equipment of, 160
- experiences of, 206
- evaluation (retrospective) of, 136, 140, 143, 175
- feminist, 117
- fragmentation of, 86, 134, 294
- friendships in, 104–105, 107, 152, 199, 281
- historiography of *tamizdat* and, 8, 8n20, 93
- and human rights violations/
discourse, 338–339, 342, 344, 352–353, 356, 379
- in Hungary, 107, 109, 126, 170, 173–174, 287, 406n270
- ideas behind/in *tamizdat* and, 9, 106, 111, 114, 125, 152, 159, 269, 351, 389
- and identity, 107, 108, 261–262
- Jewish, 194,
- and Jewish heritage, 203
- journals, 114, 123, 281, 284, 170, 253
- label of, 22
- language of, 119, 270
- and *magnitizdat*, 247, 283, 297
- materiality of *tamizdat* and, 8, 22, 119, 129, 134–135, 136n251, 205, 261, 380
- moral dimension of, 87, 125, 134, 136, 175, 267, 379
- nationalist, 113
- and official culture, 70, 110, 112, 114–115, 119, 123–125, 133, 138, 205, 289, 340
- and persecution, 133–134, 281, 338, 342, 344, 352
- in Poland, 7n11, 97, 114, 126, 136, 266–267, 281, 406n270
- production/reproduction of, 7, 22, 107, 112, 114, 119–120, 123, 128, 136, 160, 220, 261, 277, 281, 379
- and publishers, xiv, 7n11, 12, 15, 32, 107, 109, 124, 131–132, 134–136, 156, 260, 266, 269, 277, 305, 379
- and radio broadcasting, 133, 221, 238, 240–245, 247, 248, 254, 297, 343–344
- quality of, 15, 112–113, 119–120, 169, 254
- readings of, 107, 238, 241, 256, 267
- readership of, 12, 124–125, 199
- recordings of, 221, 247, 260, 283
- secrecy in/of, 108, 142, 221, 267, 270, 281, 283–284, 287, 427
- See also* solidarity
- solidarity among activists of, 110–111, 199, 270
- Szamizdat Butik, 107, 109
- as social practice, 14, 104–107, 126, 152, 220–221, 248, 256–257, 260–262, 267, 270–271, 305, 427
- as source of reliable information, 109, 113–114, 119, 238, 244, 252, 339, 342, 344, 361
- in the Soviet Union, 21, 57, 78, 126, 172, 241, 255–256, 367
- and *tamizdat*, 1, 2, 8, 12–13, 14, 21, 22, 78, 113, 115, 122–124, 126, 129, 131, 134–138, 140,

- 152, 156, 159, 172, 185,
186, 194, 199, 205, 220, 238,
240–241, 254, 260–261, 267,
270–271, 281, 283–284, 287,
305, 341, 344, 351–352, 367,
400–401, 425, 427, 428
transnational links in, 108, 156
transnational system and net-
work, 12, 156, 159–160, 221,
238, 256, 260–261, 270, 276,
284, 305–307, 344, 351, 400,
425, 427
western perspective on/reception
of, 44, 183, 185–186, 199, 203,
205, 251, 253, 271, 305, 344,
361, 377, 380, 428
western reporting on/solidarity
with, 273, 283, 341–342, 352,
275, 377, 379–380, 428
women of/in, 93, 97, 116, 142,
146
See also Chronicle of Current
Events; Czechoslovak Docu-
mentation Center; Dr. Zhivago;
Gulag Archipelago; non-con-
formist
The Samizdat Bulletin, 372n161, 379
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 76–77, 123
Scammell, Michael, 63, 67, 70–71,
102, 125, 134, 149, 321, 373–
375, 383, 390–392, 418–419; *See*
also Index on Censorship
Schapiro, Leonard, 255, 377
Scheur, Wolfgang, 306–307
Schlegl, Hubert (Weiden), 307n361,
308–309
Schulz, Bruno, 180, 203
Shulz, George P., 167
SED (Socialist Unity Party of Ger-
many), 289, 292
Seghers, Anna, 291
senders (of texts), 235
Serbia, 286
Shawcross, William, 369
Sheba Feminist Press, 146
Shoah, *See* Holocaust
show trials, 46, 64
Šiklová, Jiřina, 94–95, 123, 139,
156, 261, 274–276, 307
Silone, Ignazio, 59
Sillers, Robert, 166, 176, 177n407,
184, 191–192, 378, 379
Simmons, Ernest J., 36
Sinyavsky-Daniel trial, 14, 31, 45–
47, 47n134, 51–60, 64, 71, 74,
77, 101, 198, 353
Sinyavsky, Andrei *also known as*
Abram Tertz, 31, 31n62, 34, 35,
35n82, 41, 42, 45–46, 45n124,
46n127, 47, 47n134, 48–60, 62,
64–68 71, 74, 77, 101, 103, 111,
133, 156, 168, 168n380, 170–
171, 175, 197–198, 242–243,
244, 268, 353, 378, 389
and *Syntaxis*, 168, 168n380, 170,
175
Sixty-Eight Publishers, xii, 129,
129n220, 130, 275, 308, 372
Zdena Salivarová, 129, 130, 275,
308
Josef Škvorecký, 129, 275, 308
Skilling, H. Gordon, xii, 130, 138,
240n87, 261, 276
Škvorecký, Josef, xi, 129, 130,
156n335, 275, 308, 413
Slonim, Marc, 36
Smith, Hedrick, 301
Smolar, Alexander, 100, 156n335,
162n360
Smolar, Eugeniusz, 100, 136,
156n335, 168n380, 173n397, 240
smuggling, 15, 16, 52, 66, 122, 126,
151, 201–202, 248, 260, 263,
267–268, 271, 274, 276–277, 281,
283, 285, 295, 302, 304–305,
308–309, 313–314, 374
Socialist Realism, 14, 24, 27, 30–31,
33, 35, 40, 43–44, 57, 104, 119,
124, 125, 319
'socrealist', 33–34

- Socialist Scholars Conference, 148
- Solidarity (*Solidarność*) movement,
109, 115–116, 120, 178, 277,
282, 365; *See also* Polish-Czech
Solidarity
- Solidarność*, *See* Solidarity movement
- Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, 14, 14n47,
63, 65–75, 66n203, 69n213,
73n233, 77, 79, 87–89, 149, 156,
168n382, 187, 206, 244, 246–
247, 253, 256, 296, 301–303,
305–306, 305n354, 378–379,
389, 398, 426–427
- August 1914*, 247
- Cancer Ward*, 67, 69, 70–71
- The First Circle*, 66, 66n203,
67–68, 187, 247
- The Gulag Archipelago*, xii, xiii,
14, 72–75, 74n235, 77, 79, 210,
215, 246
- The Oak and the Calf*, 65
- Invisible Allies*, 68, 301
- and smuggling, 302
- Sontag, Susan, 167, 177n407, 334,
346, 369, 384, 419
- and writers' congresses/confer-
ences, 167, 346, 369, 384, 419
- Soros, George, 320
- Soviet Bloc, 12–13, 38, 58, 115–
116, 122, 147–148, 155, 158,
164–166, 187, 194, 202, 208,
236–237, 242–248, 287–289,
291, 294, 296, 310–311, 316,
333–339, 345–346, 357–358,
364–365, 382, 419
- control and repression in the,
164, 337–338, 335
- gender in the, 146
- human rights issues inside, 187,
346
- literary/cultural life in the, 166,
178, 349, 369
- production/circulation of uncen-
sored literature inside, 219–220,
230, 255, 302, 349, 369, 382
- reliable information on/from,
229, 240, 244–246, 253
- radio broadcasting in/back into
the, 236, 244, 246–248, 259
- samizdat* in the, 134, 246, 339
- samizdat* crossing the borders of
the, 108, 244, 255, 349, 369
- smuggling in/out of the, 297, 321
- tamizdat* from the, 172, 260, 365,
369
- travels to/from the, 194, 248, 369
- trials across the, 60–61
- See also* opposition
- Soviet Union, (Union of Soviet
Socialist Republics), 427
- ambassadors to the/embassies in
the, 79, 302, 304, 309
- anti-Semitism in the, 193–194
- and the Biennale del Dissenso,
163, 167
- camp/prison literature from the,
120, 290, 345
- and censorship/Glavlit, 33, 102,
111, 126, 132, 144n284, 170,
245, 304, 364
- and the CIA, 169–170
- and Cold War politics, 304, 309
- disillusionment with Soviet-type
communism/eurocommunism,
75–78, 98,
- détente in the, 33, 78, 256,
257–259, 349, 140, 104, 164,
185, 228
- everyday life in the, 99, 204
- émigrés/émigré literature/emigra-
tion/forced exile from, 72–73,
77, 156, 170, 191, 193, 239,
242, 247, 340, 364, 364, 427
- feminism/women's movement/
feminist *samizdat* in, 118,
146–147
- human rights violation/discourse/
movement in the, 57, 60–61,
183, 344–345, 345n60, 347,
353, 361

- lessons from the, 185–186
 literary dissonance in the, 43, 64, 119
 non-conformism in the, 47n131, 89, 102, 170, 243, 256, 270
 official life/literature/culture in the, 32–33, 48, 64, 66, 69, 73, 75, 144, 174, 243, 268
 persecution and punishment in the, 57, 120, 152, 182, 193–194, 340, 345, 377
 pioneering role of *tamizdat* in the, 14, 20, 21, 24, 289–290, 295
 propaganda in the, 33, 54, 71, 120
samizdat/uncensored literary life in the, 40, 50, 142, 255
 and domination over its satellite states, 120, 235, 237–238, 347, 407, 409, 413, 419
 secrecy and anonymity inside the, 68, 270
 smuggling out of/into the, 46, 66n203, 68, 71, 127, 174, 190, 268, 273, 296, 301, 385
 sovietologists, 36, 252–253, 271
tamizdat in/from the, 35, 46, 46n127, 49–50, 65–66, 127, 141, 170, 190, 255, 268, 271, 273, 341, 361, 367, 379
 the thaw/destalinization in the, 64
 transnational solidarity with the persecuted in the, 62, 78, 152, 185–186, 319, 347, 353, 361
 transnational network, links, community between the West and the, 63, 88, 127, 142, 190, 256, 268, 270, 295, 301, 319, 361, 385
 travels to the, 181, 204, 273, 319, 361
 trials in the, 53, 58, 253
 Western interest in/reporting on, 35, 40–41, 49, 78, 183, 185–186, 228, 274, 341, 347, 353, 361, 365, 379
 Western publishers/mediators of literature from the, 49, 127, 181, 183, 270, 273, 301, 361, 365
 Western radio broadcasting in the, 229, 236–237, 242–243, 259
See also Alexander Herzen Foundation; Alexander Solzhenitsyn; Andrei Sinyavsky; Andrei Amalrik; Ardis Publishers; Boris Pasternak; Carl Proffer; Ellendea Proffer; The Gulag Archipelago; GULag; Moscow Book Fair; Moscow Book Fair Reception in Exile; Radio Liberty; Soviet Writers Union; Universal Copyright Convention; YMCA Press
 Spender, Stephen, 40–41, 59, 149, 384, 394–395
 Springer, Axel, 372n157, 385n202
 Springer(-Ullstein) Publishing House, 171, 171n390, 372n157, 373n161, 385
 Sproul, Barbara, 177n407, 377
 state socialism, 76, 77, 84, 85, 87, 102, 110, 112, 134, 203, 223, 233, 288, 319, 362, 392, 397, 398
 StB (Czechoslovak Secret Police), 277, 280
 Steinbeck, John, 312, 316
 Stern, Carola, 382
 Stoppard, Tom, 86, 112, 149, 177n407, 191–193, 280, 286
Every Good Boy Deserves Favor, 192
Professional Foul, 192
 Straus, Roger W., 293
 Straussler, Tomas, *See* Stoppard, Tom
 Struve, Gleb, 36, 46n127
 Struve, Nikita, 73
 Styron, William, 316–317
 Sugar, András, 110
Syntaxis, 168, 168n380, 170, 175
 Szymborska, Wisława, 97, 141

T

- Tamás, Gáspár Miklós, xv, 91–92, 108–110, 136–137, 139–140, 145–146, 153–154, 157, 172–173, 329
- tamizdat* (publishing abroad),
 aesthetics of *samizdat* and, 134–136, 205
 against literary isolation, 16
 agents of, 12–13, 220, 260
 and alternative culture, 134–135
 and ambassadorial support/post, 302, 313–314
 biographical dimension of, 183, 185, 194, 202, 208, 428
 circulation, distribution and dissemination of, 9–10, 16, 22, 59, 126, 220, 260–261, 268, 281, 352, 427
 as (post-)Cold War history, 14, 425–429
 corpus, 13, 24, 113, 122, 125–126, 231
 as common intellectual project/discourse, 9, 11, 15, 16, 126, 426–427, 429
 and Czechoslovakia, 21, 122, 126, 153, 205, 275, 281
 definition of, 6, 6n9
 and disillusionment of the left, 76, 78, 98, 104, 228
 economy of/royalties for, 53n159, 54, 131
 and émigrés/emigration/émigré literature, 157, 170, 172, 276–277, 427
 entangled histories of *samizdat* and, 2, 7, 15–16, 126
 as European history and memory, 186, 208, 422, 426, 428–429
 exhibiting, 162–168, 365
 fragmentation of, 1, 134
 and GDR, 292, 300
 historiography of, 8, 8n20, 14, 20, 90, 208
 and Hungary, 126, 153, 284
 and human rights violations/discourses, 12, 23, 121, 153, 162, 167, 176, 183–184, 187–188, 270
 ideas behind/in, 9, 152, 351, 422, 429
 intellectual contribution of, 15, 79, 141, 154, 185, 208, 371, 428–429
 literary legacy of, 19–21, 65
 materiality of *samizdat* and, 8, 134–136, 136n251, 205
 miscommunication through, 149, 202, 254, 298
 moral dimension/evaluation of, 76, 79, 132, 134, 136–137, 141, 145, 157, 208, 254, 427
 and official literature/culture, 53, 114, 124, 133, 352
 and Poland, 126, 136, 281
 persecution and punishment resulting from, 12, 63, 133–134, 186, 208, 285
 political instrumentalization of, 180, 221, 255
 as post-totalitarian culture, 21–22
 and post-1989 uncensored media, 426
 production of, 9, 10, 22, 107, 122, 126, 134, 205, 281, 352, 427
 publishers/publishing ventures of, 23, 45, 63, 114, 124, 126, 134, 136, 170, 172, 186, 232, 365, 371, 427, 428
 quality of, 114
 and radio broadcasting, 219, 221–222, 237–238, 240–241
 readership of/reading of, 135, 138, 152, 202, 205, 426, 428
 recordings of, 221, 247, 260, 283
 and *samizdat*, 1, 2, 7–8, 12–13, 14, 21, 22, 78, 113, 115, 122, 124, 126, 129, 134–138, 140,

- 152, 172, 185–186, 194, 205,
220, 232, 238, 240, 254, 260–
261, 267, 281, 284, 344, 351,
352, 367, 425, 427–428
secrecy/risks/anonymity of, 12,
16, 220, 260, 295, 302
sensationalism/voyeurism, 205,
255, 426–427
as social practice, 12–14, 126,
220, 220n5, 260, 268, 271, 274,
276–277, 281, 300, 344, 346,
351, 417, 426, 427
as source of reliable information,
153
and Soviet Union, 21, 65, 77–78,
147, 152, 170, 237, 367, 427
and the thaw, 23
transnational community, system,
network and morality, 9–10,
12–15, 63, 132, 172, 177, 208,
219, 260–261, 263, 296, 344,
351, 426, 427, 429
smuggling, 16, 126, 202, 220,
260–261, 263, 268, 271, 274,
276–277, 281, 296, 300
and trials, 31, 45, 47
and Universal Copyright Conven-
tion, 132
Western audience to/solidarity
with writers of, 63, 77, 138, 141,
152, 183, 202, 255, 371, 426
Western contribution to/report-
ing on, 59–60, 63, 80, 114, 126,
138, 147, 180, 183, 202, 255
See also Chronicle of Current
Events; embassies; émigrés;
non-conformist
The Tamizdat Connection, 8n20, 265,
296, 301
Tarsis, Valery, 154–155
Tatishchev, Stepan, 305–306
Telesin, Julius, 261, 266
Témoignages, 226, 380
thaw, 7, 14, 23, 32, 43, 61, 120,
128, 151
The Thaw (Ilya Ehrenburg), 23n21,
34, 244
theatre, 158, 224
Theiner, George, 370, 375
third basket, 347, 348, 348n72, 379,
384
Third Wave (of Russian emigration),
77, 155–156, 168
Tigrid, Pavel, 168n380, 388
Time Magazine, 267
The Times (of London), 59, 154,
356, 371
The Sunday Times, 256
Times Literary Supplement, 71, 390
torture, 206, 311, 338, 338n30
tortured, 196, 337
transnational communication struc-
tures, 177
Trial of the Four, 47, 60, 61
The Trial of the Four (Pavel Lit-
vinov), xi, 62
- ## U
- Újvidék, *See* Novi Sad
Ulbricht, Walter, 292
Updike, John, 177n407, 187, 195,
204–207, 316–319, 359
“Bech in Czech,” 204–206
literary alter-ego of, 204
and *samizdat* and *tamizdat* aes-
thetics, 205, 206
underground
activists/activity, 76, 89, 102,
105, 110, 157, 235, 253, 269,
275–276, 303, 306, 310, 339,
341, 358
aesthetics of the, 205
artistic, 316
broadcasting the, 242, 245, 271
circulation in the, 7, 70
cultural/underground culture,
165, 167, 369
emigration of writers from the,
156

expressions of the, 12
 journals, 60, 267, 385
 literary, 8, 9, 16, 32, 41, 65, 85–87, 89–90, 90n32, 95, 98, 100, 102, 108, 112, 122–123, 125, 129, 132, 136, 138–139, 157, 160–161, 175, 178, 203, 237, 240–241, 263, 276, 282, 290–291, 300, 306, 310, 314, 318, 385, 401, 420, 426
 literature, 1, 5, 6, 10, 13, 20, 24n27, 43n115, 72, 100, 87, 100, 107, 132, 144–145, 159, 166, 168, 178, 180, 185, 201–202, 205, 208, 234, 245, 254, 262, 289, 321, 365, 362n121, 428
 movement, 111, 117, 140, 168, 172, 291
 and official literature, 125
 and *samizdat*, 7, 7n11, 12, 32, 57, 60–61, 70, 86–87, 102, 107, 108–109, 113, 115–117, 122–123, 125, 131–132, 134, 136, 138, 167, 173, 185, 203, 205–206, 234, 237, 240, 242, 247, 253–254, 262–263, 268, 271, 277, 281, 289, 307, 316, 339, 379–380, 428
 smuggling out of the, 283
 suffering of writers from the, 205
 Western support of the, 277–278, 283
 women in the, 116–119
 writers, 10, 14, 35, 47, 66 77, 84, 87, 90–91, 98, 102, 107–108, 111, 131, 134, 136–137, 140–141, 145, 149, 151–152, 156–157, 164–165, 173, 177, 180–182, 190, 195, 205–207, 235, 242, 253, 274, 288–289, 294–295, 302–303, 305, 307, 310–311, 319, 339, 341, 351, 353, 378–379, 382, 388, 393, 401, 405, 414–415, 417, 420–421, 428

United States, 109, 126, 136, 147–148, 153n326, 167–168, 180, 189–190, 193–194, 198, 200, 220–222, 228, 234, 237, 249, 258–259, 292, 304, 309, 312–313, 315, 334, 347, 351, 359, 363, 365, 369, 411, 417
 unofficial culture, 88, 125
Unpublished Works of Soviet Authors, 244
 United Nations, 114, 338, 339, 349
 Universal Copyright Convention (UCC), 132
 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 338–339, 341, 351, 373
 Urban, George, 241
 Urbánek, Zdeněk, 358
 Utitz, Bedřich, 131

V

Vaculík, Ludvík, 103, 145, 396
 Vladimov, Georgii, 156, 352, 367
 Voice of America (VOA), 86, 237, 241, 244
 Voivodina, 286–287
 Vonnegut, Kurt, 177n407, 316, 317, 318, 319
 VONS (the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted), 279
 Voynovich, Vladimir, 400
 Voznesenskaia, Julia, 147
 Voznesensky, Andrei, 204, 207

W

The Washington Post, 121, 301
 Wästberg, Per, xv, 186, 329, 369, 370
 Weidener Literaturtage, 306–309
The White Book, 46–48, 47n134, 51, 60, 353
 and censorship, 51
 and human rights, 47, 51, 353

- Sinyavsky and Daniel trial, 46,
47, 47n134, 51, 353
- Wiesel, Elie, 177n407, 193–194, 208
- Writers and Scholars International
(WSI), *See Index on Censorship*
- Writers from the Other Europe
(book series), *See* Roth, Philip
- Wolf, Christa, 95–97, 291, 293
Nachdenken über Christa T.,
95–96
Der Geteilte Himmel, 96
- women, 92–95, 97, 100, 116–119,
120, 146–148, 180, 190, 263–
264, 275, 361
feminism, 93, 118, 149
and *samizdat*, 93, 117, 119, 146,
263–264
social activism of, 94–95, 117,
119, 147–148, 263–264, 275
and *tamizdat*, 146–147
- Wojtyła, Karol (Pope John Paul II),
281
- world literature, 42, 68, 72, 395, 399
as common European con-
science, 395, 399
- writers' congresses, 167, 293, 334–
336, 346, 352, 367, 384
- writers' rights, *See* human rights
- writers' unions, 66, 68–69, 71–72,
96, 352, 366–367
Soviet Writers' Union, 66, 68–
69, 71–72, 352, 367
- ## Y
- Yakir, Irina, 93, 340
- YMCA Press, 71, 73, 73n233,
74n235, 168n381
The Gulag Archipelago, 73,
74n235
Solzhenitsyn, 71, 73, 73n233
- Yugoslavia, 118, 148, 286, 369, 417
and feminism, 118, 148
- ## Z
- Zamoyska, Helena Peletier, 48–53,
68
- Zapis*, 281
- Zinovyev, Aleksandr, 156

Written Here, Published There offers a new perspective on the role of underground literature in the Cold War and challenges us to recognize gaps in the Iron Curtain. The book identifies a transnational undertaking that reinforced détente, dialogue, and cultural transfer, and thus counterbalanced the persistent belief in Europe's irreversible division. It analyzes a cultural practice that attracted extensive attention during the Cold War but has largely been ignored in recent scholarship: *tamizdat*, or the unauthorized migration of underground literature across the Iron Curtain. Investigating the transfer of underground literature from the 'Other Europe' to Western Europe, the United States, and back illuminates the intertwined fabrics of Cold War literary cultures. Perceiving *tamizdat* as both a literary and a social phenomenon, the book focuses on how individuals participated in this border-crossing activity and used secretive channels to guarantee the free flow of literature. The image that emerges of this largely unknown cultural encounter transcends continuing perceptions of the artificial East-West divide, revealing that *tamizdat* contributed to the recreation of a transnational literary community.

"*Written Here, Published There* is a truly innovative, deep and profoundly researched work that will change the way the Cold War history is approached and understood. The book overcomes the rigid division that traditionally governed the cultural history of the East-Central Europe under the communist rule. It proposes a new, cultural and political perspective through the enlargement of the base of texts considered, inclusion of political and diplomatic stories about the texts and information flows. Based on very extensive, multi-language archival research, the book is using several types of materials: besides literature and political texts, also interviews, audio and video recordings, conference papers, and press clippings. The work of Friederike Kind-Kovács will have wide-ranging consequences for the study of the period, contributing to the creation of a new type of pan-European studies."

Irena Grudzinska Gross, Princeton University

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